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COMPLEXITY AND CREATIVITY:
JOHN'S PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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Declaration

I composed this thesis, the work is my own. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vi
Abstract	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Previous Study of the Depiction of Jesus in Revelation	2
The Presentation of Jesus in Revelation: A Brief History of Research	2
Assessment of Previous Studies	12
Orientation and Structure of Present Study	14
Chapter Two: John, Jesus and the Roman Imperial Cult	16
Preliminary Consideration: The Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation	16
The Seven Cities, Temples, and Emperor Worship	17
The Beast from the Sea and Its Image	18
Babylon/Rome	19
Roman Emperor Worship	21
Introductory Matters	22
The Nature and Impact of the Roman Imperial Cult	25
Summary and Conclusions	62
The Roman Imperial Cult and Jesus in Revelation	64
Polemical Parallelism	64
Evidence from Revelation	66
Polemical Parallelism: An Assessment	78
Chapter Three: John, Jesus and the Old Testament	82
Major Images and Themes	84
Lamb	84
Throne Imagery	92

Angelomorphic Imagery and the Glorious “One Like a Son of Man”	101
The Rider on the White Horse	112
Summary	118
Minor Images and Titles	119
Revelation 1	119
Revelation 2-3	128
Revelation 5	131
Revelation 7	134
Lord, King, and Christ	135
Revelation 20-22	137
Summary	138
Summary and Evaluation	138
John, the Old Testament, and His Readers	139
The Old Testament and John’s Presentation of Jesus	141
Chapter Four: John, Jesus, and the Context of Early Christianity	145
John and His Churches	147
Religious Worldview	153
The Presentation of Jesus	156
Life and Teaching of Jesus	157
Early Christian Titles and Images of Jesus	163
Jesus Devotion	166
Summary	168
Chapter Five: John’s Presentation of Jesus	169
The Complexity of Imagery	169
Types of Imagery	170
Sources of Imagery	172
Composite or Complex Work?	174

Prominent Depictions of Jesus in Revelation	177
John's Use of Titles	177
Lamb	184
The Significance of Ritual	190
Conclusion	198
Chapter Six: Conclusion	200
Bibliography	203

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an examination of John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Past studies of John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation have tended to focus upon either the synthesis of the various themes and phrases or upon a particular image used throughout the book. Past studies have likewise generally focused upon either the Old Testament or Roman emperor worship as the major source for the imagery used by John. Within this thesis, I argue that John interacts with imagery from his cultural context (Roman emperor worship), from the key writings of his apparent religious heritage (the Old Testament), and from convictions shared with the wider early Christian community. In the sections devoted to each of these three sources (Roman emperor worship, the Old Testament writings, and early Christianity), I provide an assessment of the way that John utilizes images, phrases, and motifs from each in his depiction of Jesus. The interaction with this material represents, I argue, not a haphazard conglomeration of material from divergent sources, but rather a complex, well-developed set of religious convictions concerning Jesus, creatively expressed in this early Christian writing.

ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to the standard abbreviations noted in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, the following abbreviations have been used in this thesis:

<i>Ath.Mitt.</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archaologischen Instituts Athenische Abteilung</i>
<i>AvP</i>	<i>Die Altertümer von Pergamon</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i>
<i>IBM</i>	<i>The Collection of Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>IGR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>IvEph</i>	<i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos</i>
<i>IvPergamon</i>	<i>Die Inschriften von Pergamon</i>
<i>IvSm</i>	<i>Die Inschriften von Smyrna</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation stands out as a unique document in a variety of ways when compared with the other New Testament writings. As a result of its genre, imagery and symbolism, themes, and use of the Old Testament and other sources, Revelation has continued to interest both scholar and layperson alike. One remarkable feature is John's presentation of Jesus, and many scholars have commented on the "high" nature of John's religious convictions.¹ Throughout the book of Revelation, a number of terms, names, and images are used to refer to Jesus. Most scholars suggest that John has drawn these aspects of his presentation of Jesus from the Old Testament writings, the writings of Second Temple Judaism, and/or the Hellenistic/Roman milieu. This thesis will assess John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation and situate these religious convictions within the wider religious landscape of the day.

By way of introduction, I will offer first a brief survey and assessment of past studies of John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation. Next, I will set forth the particular approach of this proposed study and indicate its place within the larger context of research. Finally, I will introduce the overall orientation and approach of the study as a whole.

¹ Donald Guthrie notes, "Once the strangeness of the genre is accepted, the presentation of Christ may be claimed to be of the highest order." See "The Christology of Revelation" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 397. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 23-65, esp. 63; Jonathan Knight, "The Enthroned Christ of Revelation 5:6 and the Development of Christian Theology," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (ed. Steve Moyise; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 43. Most scholars have departed from the suggestion of Bultmann that it is a "weakly Christianized Judaism" ("ein schwach christianisiertes Judentum"). See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Neue theologische Grundrisse; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1953), 518.

Previous Study of the Depiction of Jesus in Revelation

John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation has elicited attention in a number of secondary sources within recent scholarship. In order to situate the present study within the larger context of the study of John's depiction of Jesus, I will offer here a brief survey of the scholarly literature. Although not as numerous as the studies devoted to the presentation of Jesus in other New Testament writings, a number of important works have been dedicated to the depiction of Jesus in Revelation.

The Presentation of Jesus in Revelation: A Brief History of Research

Within the past century, several major studies of John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation have dominated the scholarly discussion. Among these, Friedrich Büchsel, Traugott Holtz, and J. Comblin have provided the main contributions to the scholarly discussion during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. The last quarter of the twentieth century and the first portion of the twenty-first have seen a renewed interest in John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation. In this section, I will briefly review the major contributions of Büchsel, Holtz, and Comblin before introducing more recent entries into the discussion. Major studies, both in scope and significance, will be given primary consideration.

Written in the early part of the twentieth century, Büchsel's study of the Christology of Revelation set the stage for several of the major studies that would follow.² Although relatively brief, it provides a helpful introduction to the material in Revelation. Büchsel's study is organized thematically, with the major sections focusing upon the Lamb and the throne, the blood of the Lamb, the wrath of the Lamb, the "Lord of the church," and the "son of the woman" in Rev 12. Throughout this study, Büchsel's primary focus is upon the interplay of themes within the book of Revelation. His analysis helps to demonstrate, in this way, the integration of various themes in John's presentation of Jesus. Several critiques are in order, however. One of the main shortcomings is Büchsel's interaction with potential sources for the imagery used by John. He does discuss John's use of Old Testament imagery, but consideration in this regard is relatively brief, even for a work of this

² Friedrich Büchsel, *Die Christologie der Offenbarung Johannis* (Halle: Druck von C. A. Kämmerer, 1907).

length. He provides some interaction with other early Christian writings, but consideration of the influence of Greco-Roman materials is minimal at best. In addition, his study is largely unbalanced, as he spends nearly a third of the work dealing with Rev 12. Although the discussion has advanced in a number of ways since its publication, *Die Christologie der Offenbarung Johannis* provides a valuable entry into the discussion.

Holtz's *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* marked an important development in the scholarly discussion as a result of his more detailed study of the depiction of Jesus in Revelation.³ Like Büchsel, Holtz focuses primarily upon the titles used of Jesus, but he provides a more robust examination of the material present in Revelation. One of the benefits of Holtz's study is his engagement with the Old Testament. Primary attention is directed to the Old Testament as a source for the imagery used by John, and then other potential sources are given secondary consideration. Holtz divides his discussion, however, into present and future aspects of John's presentation of Jesus. In regards to the present aspects, Holtz discusses themes such as the enthronement of the Lamb, the titles used in 1:5, the death of Jesus, and the rule of Jesus over the churches and the world. Amongst the future aspects Holtz includes the *parousia* in Rev 19 and the imagery of the New Jerusalem. Although this organization helps to bring to light the complexity in John's presentation of Jesus, the division between present and future aspects fails to capture accurately the nature of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus.⁴ Holtz's focus upon titles used of Jesus in some ways limits his assessment of the imagery in Revelation, as John's presentation of Jesus cannot be exclusively tied to his use of titles. Nevertheless, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* remains an important contribution to the discussion.

Along with the studies of Büchsel and Holtz, Comblin's study on the Christology of Revelation provides a third major voice in the discussion.⁵ Comblin

³ Traugott Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes* (TUGAL 85; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962).

⁴ Significant motifs, such as the kingship of Jesus (1:5, 9; 11:15; 12:10; 17:14; 19:16) and his relationship to the heavenly throne (3:21; 5:6-14; 7:9-11; 17; 22:1, 3), may be found throughout Revelation. Likewise, although certain elements of the narrative should be seen, from the perspective of John and his readers, as lying in the future, it is not clear that John's presentation of Jesus can be divided neatly into those temporal categories.

⁵ J. Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'apocalypse* (Bibliothèque de théologie, Théologie biblique 3/6; Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1965).

identifies the images of the Lamb, the Messiah, and the Son of Man as the most significant themes in Revelation.⁶ For the final of these, Comblin views John's identification of the Servant of Isaiah with the Danielic Son of Man as a key part of his depiction of Jesus.⁷ In his discussion of these themes, Comblin gives much consideration to the influence of Old Testament imagery.⁸ In particular, the imagery of the latter portion of Isaiah plays a significant, if not the most significant, role in his interpretation. Comblin also seeks to situate the imagery used by John in the historical context of persecution by the Roman Empire.⁹ In his estimation, the "Son of Man" is the primary image used by John to combat imperial ideology.¹⁰

Comblin's study remains one of the most significant on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation, but certain critiques should be noted. First, his dependence upon Isaianic imagery is overextended in portions of his study.¹¹ Next, more notably, his identification of the Isaianic servant as the Son of Man is difficult to sustain, as Revelation employs the imagery of "one *like* a son of man."¹² Finally, although certain elements of John's depiction of Jesus as the "(one like a) Son of Man" likely serve to contrast with Roman imperial imagery, the employment of this imagery stretches beyond this particular motive in significant ways.¹³

The studies of Büchsel, Holtz, and Comblin, then, provided significant contributions to the study of the presentation of Jesus in Revelation through their elucidation of significant titles and motifs. As noted, primary attention was devoted in these studies to the relationship between Revelation and key Old Testament texts,

⁶ Ibid. 12.

⁷ Ibid. 12, 41-42, 233.

⁸ He notes that in some cases Revelation could be considered "un midrash chrétien des prophéties messianiques" (Ibid. 13).

⁹ Ibid. 14, 94-96.

¹⁰ Ibid. 14, 94-106.

¹¹ As will be seen, imagery from Isaiah does employ a significant role in the imagery used by John, but at times Comblin appeals to imagery from Isaiah where other Biblical texts more likely serve as John's source. The identification of the Lamb as the Servant of Isaiah, likewise, is not entirely convincing.

¹² So noted by Thomas B. Slater, *Christ and Community: A Socio-Historical Study of the Christology of Revelation* (JSNTSup 178; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 58. Comblin's identification of the imagery of the rider in Rev 19 as "Son of Man" imagery is likewise unconvincing, as elements of his depiction demonstrate more compelling links with a variety of other Old Testament texts (*Le Christ*, 49, 94).

¹³ See Comblin, *Le Christ*, 14.

and little consideration was given to the relationship with Greco-Roman imagery. Within more recent decades, a number of other significant studies on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation have been published. Although many of these have tended to focus on particular aspects, several more wide-ranging studies, such as those by Richard Bauckham, Thomas Slater, Dan Liroy, Monica-Elena Herghelegiu, and Brian Hand, deserve mention at this point.

Bauckham's work on the imagery used of Jesus in Revelation has focused upon the theme of worship in the book of Revelation and the relationship between God and Jesus.¹⁴ On the former, Bauckham has argued that the angelic prohibitions in Revelation, a motif used elsewhere in Jewish and early Christian writings, function to safeguard the monotheistic convictions of the author.¹⁵ On the latter, Bauckham has also argued that John develops the use of shared titles in Revelation to affirm the relationship between Jesus and God, particularly in light of statements from the latter portion of Isaiah.¹⁶ Bauckham's work in this area has largely dealt with significant themes rather than with the imagery used to depict Jesus in Revelation as a whole. Although Bauckham has not produced a study on the Christology in Revelation on the same scale as these aforementioned major studies, his writings in this area have played an influential role in subsequent discussions concerning monotheism and the worship of Jesus in Revelation. Further advancements may be made upon his arguments, however, as I will demonstrate in chapter five.

Slater's *Christ and Community* takes a slightly different approach regarding the Christology of Revelation.¹⁷ Slater's interest is in relating the imagery used of Jesus to the pastoral context of the seven churches of Asia Minor. He posits that the Christians in Asia Minor were facing some form of localized repression during the reign of Domitian.¹⁸ Rather than focusing on titles, Slater divides his study into the dominant images of the "One like a Son of Man," the "Lamb," and the "Divine

¹⁴ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), esp. 118-149 and 174-198; and id., "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1981): 322-341; and id., *Theology*, 23-65.

¹⁵ Bauckham, *Climax*, 118-149; and id., "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity," *NTS* 27 (1981): 322-341;

¹⁶ Bauckham, *Climax*, 33-34; and id., *Theology*, 54-58.

¹⁷ Slater, *Christ and Community*.

¹⁸ Ibid. 32.

Warrior.” In his estimation, these images communicate notions of both power¹⁹ and suffering.²⁰ The image of the Lamb, in particular, is a symbol that responds pastorally to apparent suffering amongst early Christians in Asia Minor.²¹ One of the strengths of Slater’s study is that it gives greater emphasis to the situation faced by John’s readers. While this approach, on its own, may not explain the sources of John’s imagery, Slater’s study does, in this way, shed greater light on the possible reason(s) for employing particular images. It should be noted, however, that despite his concern with the historical context, little attention is given to the ways in which emperor worship, a significant feature in that context, may have influenced certain images in Revelation. He does view the images as responding pastorally to pressures facing Christians in Asia Minor, but he does not develop ways in which John may be adapting imagery from emperor worship in his depiction of Jesus. In addition, since the publication of *Christ and Community*, Slater has revised his views regarding the dating of Revelation.²² The conclusion that one draws concerning the dating of Revelation necessarily influences one’s assessment of the situation(s) facing the seven churches, and this shift in viewpoint could be seen as calling into question the historical setting and conclusions presented in *Christ and Community*. The arguments raised against a date during the mid 90’s C.E. in his subsequent article are far from conclusive, however, and a date during the reign of Domitian can still be maintained. One must proceed with caution, however, when basing a theory upon the reconstruction of past historical contexts, and this present study will take into account wider patterns of evidence within the late first century C.E.

Liroy’s *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus* deals with the wider influence of the imagery used of Jesus upon the theology of Revelation as a whole.²³ In his presentation of the Christological imagery, Liroy considers five categories: “fulfillment motifs,” “resurrection,” “Son of God,” “Son of Man,” and the “Lamb.”²⁴ His use of these categories, however, faces some of the same challenges as earlier

¹⁹ Ibid. 236, 241-242.

²⁰ Ibid. 236-237.

²¹ Ibid. 203-204, 236.

²² Thomas B. Slater, “Dating the Apocalypse to John,” *Bib* 84 (2003): 252-258.

²³ Dan Liroy, *The Book of Revelation in Christological Focus* (Studies in Biblical Literature 58; New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

²⁴ Ibid. 114.

studies that focused upon titles in Revelation. It is debatable, for example, whether “Son of God” should be considered a major category, as it only occurs in a handful of passages. In addition to his evaluation of John’s imagery, Lioy also directs attention to the importance of both historical factors and literary features. Despite this concern, however, he spends little space interacting with potential influences from the wider Greco-Roman culture. Finally, one of the strengths of Lioy’s study is his attempt to demonstrate the Christological focus in the book of Revelation. This present study will affirm this conclusion, albeit in a slightly different fashion.

Next, Herghelegiu’s *Siehe, er kommt mit den Wolken* provides a series of studies examining the major images used of Jesus in Revelation.²⁵ For Herghelegiu, the threefold description of Jesus in 1:5 as the “faithful witness,” the “firstborn of the dead,” and the “ruler of the kings of the earth” provides the key introduction for the major themes in Revelation.²⁶ In addition to an extended discussion of this verse and the ways in which John develops these themes in Revelation,²⁷ Herghelegiu also provides us with studies centered around the eschatology of Revelation, the “One like a son of man,” and the imagery of the apocalyptic rider and the rider on the white horse. Throughout these studies, Herghelegiu offers careful interaction with the details of the text and demonstrates the way in which these themes are expressed coherently throughout Revelation. Consideration of John’s use of the Old Testament is offered throughout, and Herghelegiu also compares some of the expressions used by John with those that occur elsewhere in early Christian writings. Unfortunately, Greco-Roman imagery, and particularly imagery associated with emperor worship, is not a major focus of this study.

Hand’s *The Worthy Champion* offers an attempt to complement historical-grammatical approaches with one informed by literary criticism.²⁸ As a result, Hand organizes his study around topics such as genre and narrator, characterization, and plot. He does demonstrate the integration of John’s imagery of Jesus within the larger structure of the book, but this work suffers from certain limitations. First, his

²⁵ Monica-Elena Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt mit den Wolken! Studien zur Christologie der Johannesoffenbarung* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 23; Theologie, Bd. 785; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004).

²⁶ Ibid. 224.

²⁷ Ibid. 29-73.

²⁸ Brian R. Hand, *The Worthy Champion: A Christology of the Book of Revelation Based on Elements of Its Literary Composition* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 2008).

identification of Revelation as “prophetic” (as opposed to apocalyptic) serves primarily a theological role rather than a literary one, which proves to be an unfortunate problem for a study focused on a literary-critical approach.²⁹ Next, although Hand focuses upon the literary nature of John’s presentation of Jesus, greater attention to the sources of imagery would have strengthened his discussion of the literary context. *The Worthy Champion* engages a number of important literary-critical questions, but greater consideration of John’s literary artistry in his adaptation of imagery from other sources is certainly needed.

As we have seen thus far, most major studies have tended still to focus upon titles and dominant images as the means of assessment and organization. Greater attention has been given to the relationship between Revelation and the Old Testament writings, but investigation of connections with emperor worship, a key feature in Asia Minor, has largely been marginalized. Moreover, other major studies on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation have tended to deal with particular aspects of John’s presentation. Several studies, in this way, address what has been termed “angelomorphic” Christology in Revelation.³⁰ Likewise, the depiction of Jesus as the “Lamb” has also been the focus of a number of both major and minor studies.³¹ I

²⁹ Ibid. 30-38. Hand does recognize, however, the presence of other subgenres within Revelation (see pg. 39).

³⁰ On this, see Christopher Rowland, “The Influence of the First Chapter of Ezekiel on Jewish and Early Christian Literature” (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1975); and id., “The Vision of the Risen Christ in Rev 1.13ff.: The Debt of an Early Christology to an Aspect of Jewish Angelology,” *JTS* 31 (1980): 1-11; and id., “A Man Clothed in Linen: Daniel 10.6ff. and Jewish Angelology,” *JSNT* 24 (1985): 99-110; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998); Robert Gundry, “Angelomorphic Christology in the Book of Revelation,” *The Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 33; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 662-678; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995); and id., “An Angelic Refusal of Worship: The Tradition and Its Function in the Apocalypse of John,” *The Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 33; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 679-696; Peter Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (SNTSMS 95; Cambridge: Cambridge, 1997); Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (WUNT 2/109; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1999); Matthias Reinhard Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb: The Relationship between Angelomorphic and Lamb Christology in the Book of Revelation* (WUNT 2/203; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2005).

³¹ Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse: An Investigation in Its Origins and Rhetorical Force* (WUNT 2/167; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003). In addition to Johns’ monograph, a number of other articles and essays have addressed this theme in Revelation. See Charles K. Barrett, “The Lamb of God,” *NTS* 1 (1954): 210-218; Norman Hillyer, “‘The Lamb’ in the Apocalypse,” *EvQ* 39 (1967): 228-236; John D’Souza, *The Lamb of God in the Johannine Writings* (Allahabad: St. Paul Publications, 1968); W. C. Van Unnik, “‘Worthy is the Lamb’: The Background of Apoc. 5,” in *Melanges Bibliques En Hommage Au R. P. Beda Rigaux* (ed. Albert Descamps and R. P. André Halleux; Gembloux: Duculot, 1970), 445-461; Robert H. Mounce, “Worthy is the Lamb,” in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and*

would be remiss not to mention these studies here, but evaluation of these will be delayed until the relevant section(s) in chapter three. Finally, two studies also deserve extended mention here due to the methodology employed:

First, David Thomas' *Revelation 19 in Historical and Mythological Context* provides an investigation of the imagery of the rider on the white horse in Rev 19 in light of its wider historical context.³² Although Thomas is sensitive to the Old Testament texts likely reflected in the description of the rider, his main focus is upon John's adaptation of imagery from Greco-Roman and Parthian contexts. Thomas considers the imagery of the Roman triumph, Nero *Redivivus*, and the "Great King" of the Parthians. Thomas suggests that John has integrated imagery from these along with imagery from the Old Testament in order to portray Jesus as the true, triumphant king. Although more consideration could be given to the Old Testament imagery adapted by John in Rev 19, Thomas effectively demonstrates John's creative engagement of material from his surrounding cultural context.

Second, the work of Russell Morton should also be mentioned due to a similar orientation toward the material in Revelation.³³ Morton's primary study, *One*

Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday (ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 60-69; Donald Guthrie, "The Lamb in the Structure of the Book of Revelation," *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981): 64-71; A. Läpple, "Das Geheimnis des Lammes: Das Christusbild der Offenbarung des Johannes," *BK* 39 (1984): 53-58; Roland Bergmeier, "Das Buchrolle und das Lamm (Apk 5 und 10)," *ZNW* 76 (1985): 225-242; P. Whale, "The Lamb of John: Some Myths about the Vocabulary of the Johannine Literature," *JBL* 106 (1987): 289-295; J. Daryl Charles, "An Apocalyptic Tribute to the Lamb (Rev 5:1-14)," *JETS* 34 (1991): 461-473; A. Inman, "This is the Lamb of God," *NBf* 74 (1993): 191-197; Peter Stuhlmacher, "Das Lamm Gottes – eine Skizze," in *Frühes Christentum* (ed. Hermann Lichtenberger; vol. 3 of *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1996), 529-542; Otfried Hofius, "Arnion – Widder oder Lamm? Erwägungen zur Bedeutung des Wortes in der Johannesapokalypse," *ZNW* 89 (1998): 272-281; M. Carres, "Le deployment de la christologie de l'Agneau dans l'Apocalypse," *RHPR* 79 (1999): 5-17; Thomas Söding, "Gott und das Lamm; Theozentrik und Christologie in der Johannes-apokalypse," in *Theologie Als Vision* (ed. Knut Backhaus; SBS 191; Stuttgart: Verkalg Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2001), 77-120; Brian K. Blount, "Wreaking Weakness: A Cultural Studies Reading of the Lamb in the Apocalypse," *PSB* 25 (2004): 285-302; David L. Barr, "The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterizing Jesus in John's Apocalypse," in *Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (ed. David L. Barr; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 205-220; Rebecca Skaggs and Thomas Doyle, "Lion/Lamb in Revelation," *CBR* 7 (2009): 362-375; M.-E. Boismard, "Le Christ. Agneau, redempteur des homes," *Lumière et Vie* 7 (1958): 91-104.

³² David Andrew Thomas, *Revelation 19 in Historical and Mythological Context* (Studies in Biblical Literature 118; New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

³³ See Russell Morton, "Glory to God and to the Lamb: John's Use of Jewish and Hellenistic/Roman Themes in Formatting His Theology in Revelation 4-5," *JSNT* 83 (2001): 89-109; and id., *One Upon the Throne and the Lamb: A Tradition Historical/Theological Analysis of Revelation 4-5* (Studies in Biblical Literature 110; New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

Upon the Throne and the Lamb, hones in on the question of John's use of sources in developing the imagery used in Rev 4 and 5. He assesses the use of a number of parallels from Jewish, Ancient Near Eastern, Greco-Roman, and early Christian sources in order to determine the way in which John has developed the imagery in Revelation. Morton gives careful attention, in particular, to the relationship with Roman imperial and Old Testament themes. In addition to the identification of sources, Morton also aims to situate these two chapters in the wider framework of the apocalypse, arguing that the throne-room scene serves to justify and validate the authority of the Lamb to open the scroll.³⁴ One of the difficulties of this study, however, is the wide variety of sources considered. As John was writing in the first century, some sources of imagery are more likely than others. Although Morton does provide some justification for considering certain ancient traditions as still in operation during the first century C.E.,³⁵ in some cases greater clarity would be achieved by granting more weight to the primary contexts of John's day. More reflection upon the significance of these sources of imagery and their use in Revelation is needed, particularly as it relates to the relationship of Jesus and God. Despite these critiques, Morton's work supplies us with a helpful consideration of the relationship between the various sources of imagery used by John.

In addition to these major comprehensive studies, a number of shorter studies have also been conducted. Although some have provided a synthesis of the overall imagery in Revelation,³⁶ many have addressed aspects of John's presentation of

³⁴ *One Upon the Throne*, 196.

³⁵ See *One Upon the Throne*, 110, for example.

³⁶ F. Bovon, "Le Christ de L'Apocalypse," *RTP* 22 (1972): 72; Guthrie, "The Christology of Revelation"; C. H. Talbert, "The Christology of the Apocalypse," in *Who Do You Say I Am? Essays on Christology* (ed. M. A. Powell and D. R. Bauer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 166-184; Sarah Alexander Edwards, "Christological Perspectives in the Book of Revelation," in *Christological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Harvey K. McArthur* (ed. Robert F. Berkley and Sarah A. Edwards; New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), 139-154, 281-286; Dwight Marion Beck, "The Christology of the Apocalypse of John," in *New Testament Studies: Critical Essays in New Testament Interpretation, with Special Reference to the Meaning and Worth of Jesus* (ed. Edwin Prince Booth; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1942), 253-277; G. Diop, "Jesus Christ in the Midst of His People: A Study of Revelation 1:9-3:22," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8 (1997): 40-58; H. W. Tribble, "The Christ of the Apocalypse," *RevExp* 40 (1940): 167-176; Alan David Hultberg, "Messianic Exegesis in the Apocalypse: The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christology of Revelation" (PhD dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2001); Knight, "The Enthroned Christ"; Robert H. Mounce, "The Christology of the Apocalypse," *Foundations* 11 (1968): 42-51; Robert L. Thomas, "The Glorified Christ on Patmos," *BSac* 122 (1965): 241-247; J. G. Vos, "The Vision of Christ in the Revelation" in *A Symposium on the Book of Revelation* (ed. R. W. Nickerson; Pittsburgh: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1979), 25-34; I. La Potterie,

Jesus in Revelation or have applied certain interpretive grids or methodologies to the material.³⁷ As many of these shorter studies focus upon certain key features in John's presentation of Jesus, evaluation of their methodology and conclusions will be offered at relevant junctions within the main chapters of this thesis.

Finally, since we have noted the lack of concern with Roman imperial cult imagery in a number of the works discussed above, mention should be made here of studies focusing on the relationship between the depiction of Jesus in Revelation and the worship of the Roman emperor.³⁸ Several works, such as those of Deissmann,³⁹ Sweet,⁴⁰ and Stauffer,⁴¹ in the earlier part of the twentieth century identified this link

"Le Christ comme figure de revelation d'après saint Jean," in *Révélation dans le Christianisme et les autres Religions* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1971), 17-39.

³⁷ See R. B. Y. Scott, "Behold, He Cometh with the Clouds!" *NTS* 5 (1958-59): 127-132; M. Rissi, "Die Erscheinung Christi nach Off. 19.11-16," *TZ* 21 (1965): 81-95; Osten-Sacken, Peter von der. "Christologie, Taufe, Homologie – Ein Beitrag zu Apokalypse Joh 1,5f," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 255-266; Ulrich B. Müller, *Messias und Menschensohn in Jüdischen Apokalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (SNT 6; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972); Marinus de Jonge, "The Use of the Expression ὁ χριστός in the Apocalypse of John," in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (ed. Jan Lambrecht; Gembloux, Belgium: J. Duculot, 1980), 167-281; Michael S. Moore, "Jesus Christ: 'Superstar' (Revelation 22:16b)," *NovT* 24.1 (1982): 82-91; Frederick David Mazzaferri, "Martyria Iesou Revisited," *BT* 39 (1988): 114-122; Mitchell G. Reddish, "Martyr Christology in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 85-95; Akira Satake, "Christologie in der Johannesapokalypse im Zusammenhang mit dem Problem des Leidens der Christen," in *Aufänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Cilliers Breitenbach and Henning Paulsen; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 307-322; M. Eugene Boring, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 702-723; and id., "The Voice of Jesus in Revelation," *NovT* 34 (1992): 334-359; Otfried Hofius, "Das Zeugnis der Johannesoffenbarung von der Gottheit Jesu Christi," in *Frühes Christentum* (ed. Hermann Lichtenberger; vol. 3 of *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion*; ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1996), 511-528; Jens Herzer, "Der erste apokalyptischer Reiter und der König der Könige: Ein Beitrag zur Christologie der Johannesapokalypse," *NTS* 45.2 (1999): 230-249; L. L. Thompson, "Lamentation for Christ as a Hero: Revelation 1.7," *JBL* 119 (2000): 683-703; Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Nonviolent Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003); Charles A. Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (ed. David B. Capes et al.; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 227-243.

³⁸ On this, see Michael Naylor, "The Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation," *CBR* 8.2 (2010): 207-239.

³⁹ Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* (4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1923). The theory of "polemical parallelism," introduced by Deissmann, has played a significant role in subsequent discussion. Evaluation of Deissmann's presentation of this theory and subsequent developments will be offered in chapter two of this present study.

⁴⁰ Louis Matthews Sweet, *Roman Emperor Worship* (Boston: Gorham, 1919).

⁴¹ Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars: Historical Sketches* (trans. K. and R. Gregor Smith; London: SCM, 1955).

in Revelation, and interest in this relationship has increased within recent years.⁴²

We will delay assessment of these studies until chapter two, where we will explore with greater detail features of emperor worship and possible points of intersection with John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation.

Assessment of Previous Studies

In light of the number of studies conducted that address the presentation of Jesus in Revelation, one may question the need for another study. Several considerations in light of the present state of research indicate, however, that further study is well warranted in this area.

First, discussions of the presentation of Jesus in the book of Revelation must take into account the central conflict of the narrative, a concern that most studies fail

⁴² On the relationship between John's presentation of Jesus and Roman emperor worship, see B.A. Mastin, "The Imperial Cult and the Ascription of the Title Θεός to Jesus," in *Studia Evangelica: Papers Present to the Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies held at Oxford, 1969* (ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; TUGAL 112; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), 352-365; David E. Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John," *Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research*, 28 (1983): 5-26; and id., "The Form and Function of the Proclamation to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)," *NTS* 36 (1990): 182-204; Paul Barnett, "Polemical Parallelism: Some Further Reflections on the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 35 (1989): 111-120; J. Daryl Charles, "Imperial Pretensions and the Throne-Vision of the Lamb: Observations on the Function of Revelation 5," *CTR* 7 (1993): 85-97; Ernest P. Janzen, "The Jesus of the Apocalypse Wears the Emperor's Clothes," in *The Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 33; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 637-661; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 234-257; Justin Meggitt, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: The New Testament and the Roman Emperor," in *The Quest for Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* (ed. C. Joynt; Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002), 143-170. On Roman imperial cult imagery in Revelation more broadly, see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Christuskult und Kaiserkult* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1919); Lyder Brun, "Die römischen Kaiser in der Apokalypse," *ZNW* 26 (1927): 128-151; Roland Schütz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes und Kaiser Domitian* (FRLANT 32; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933); Paul Touilleux, *L'Apocalypse et les cultes de Domitien et de Cybèle* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1935); Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Paradosis 23; Fribourg: University Press, 1974); Donald L. Jones, "Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult," *ANRW* 23.2:1023-1054; Steven J. Scherrer, "Signs and Wonders in the Imperial Cult: A New Look at a Roman Religious Institution in the Light of Rev 13:13-15," *JBL* 103 (1984): 599-610; P. J. J. Botha, "God, Emperor Worship, and Society: Contemporary Experiences and the Book of Revelation," *NeoT* 22 (1988): 87-102; J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (JSNTSup 132; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); and id., *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010); Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001); Jörg Frey, "The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on the Relation between the Seven Letters and the Visionary Main Part of the Book," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (NovTSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 231-255.

to sufficiently address. As I will demonstrate in chapter two, conflict with Roman emperor worship provides the best explanation for this imagery in Revelation. For the most part, studies on the presentation of Jesus in Revelation have emphasized the Old Testament writings as the source for the various motifs and images used to depict Jesus. Although there are some exceptions, these studies have largely ignored the relationship with Roman imperial imagery.⁴³ Many of the studies that do assess this relationship between emperor worship and the depiction of Jesus in Revelation do not reflect the current state of research regarding the Roman imperial cult. Research within the past thirty years, as we will see in chapter two, has helped to clarify certain methodological presuppositions that hindered many of the assessments in the first half of the twentieth century. As a result, we should invite and expect further efforts to apply these findings to the interpretation of Revelation and to revisit the question of the relationship between Jesus and the emperor in Revelation as addressed previously by scholars such as Stauffer and Deissmann.

Second, there is a need to ground John's writing more firmly within the context of early Christianity. Some studies, such as those conducted by Vos⁴⁴ and Slater,⁴⁵ have attempted to assess either the traditions associated with Jesus or the situation faced by the early Christians, but greater attention must be paid to the ways in which John interacts with material reflected elsewhere in other early Christian writings. Such an approach would allow for both a clearer picture of John's contribution to the imagery in Revelation and a better assessment of the question concerning the "Christian" nature of Revelation.

Finally, most studies, with a few scant and notable exceptions,⁴⁶ have tended to focus upon one aspect of John's presentation or the relationship of his imagery to one particular source, such as the Old Testament. Individual studies have shown strong links with imagery from Roman emperor worship and with the Old Testament,

⁴³ Comblin, for example, provides some discussion of imperial themes, but the imperial cult, in his estimation, does not provide a key source for the imagery in Revelation (*Le Christ*, 94-106).

⁴⁴ Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965); see also David E. Aune, "Stories of Jesus in the Apocalypse of John," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 292-319.

⁴⁵ Slater, *Christ and Community*.

⁴⁶ See Morton "Glory to God and to the Lamb"; and id., *One Upon the Throne and the Lamb*; D. A. Thomas, *Revelation 19*; Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial"; and id., "Form and Function."

for example, but few studies have attempted to integrate material from these various contexts.⁴⁷ Therefore, a broader investigation of John's use of these sources is needed in order to more accurately assess the nature of his presentation of Jesus in Revelation.

Orientation and Structure of Present Study

In light of the above considerations, there is not only a need for greater integration but also a corresponding need for a re-evaluation of John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation. Rather than isolating a particular theme or attempting a synthesis of the various themes in Revelation, this thesis will attempt to evaluate John's religious convictions at a more basic level. I will demonstrate, in the chapters that follow, that John interacts with imagery from his cultural context (Roman emperor worship), from the key writings of his apparent religious heritage (the Old Testament), and from convictions shared with the wider early Christian community. The interaction with this material represents, I will argue, not a haphazard conglomeration of material from divergent sources, but rather a complex, well-developed set of religious convictions concerning Jesus.⁴⁸

This study will consist of four main sections:

Within the first main section (chapter two), I will provide an assessment of the imagery in Revelation in light of Roman emperor worship. This chapter will first provide an introduction of the passages in Revelation that indicate John's interaction with Roman imperial themes and imagery. Next, I will provide an evaluation of the nature and significance of emperor worship, with a view toward its expression in the context of Asia Minor. Finally, I will discuss the relationship between John's

⁴⁷ So noted also by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 17; and Gregory K. Beale, "Other Religions in New Testament Theology," in *Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment* (ed. David W. Baker; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 79-105.

⁴⁸ It should be noted, at this juncture, that by John's "religious convictions" I mean to refer to those religious convictions as expressed in written form in the book of Revelation. As the book of Revelation is an occasional document and not an exhaustive theological treatise, it is likely that aspects of John's religious worldview do not receive full treatment in the book of Revelation. Those expressed in Revelation should be seen, however, as an expression of his personal religious convictions. In addition, by using "religious convictions" I intend to include not only theologically reasoned propositions, such as the relationship of Jesus to God, but also matters of religious observance, such as acts of devotion.

presentation of Jesus and features of emperor worship. Throughout this chapter, interaction with primary materials, such as literary sources, coins, and inscriptions, will be featured prominently in the discussion. I will also incorporate insights from more recent studies on emperor worship and suggest a revision of the predominant view of “polemical parallelism.”

In the second main section of this thesis (chapter three) I will address the imagery used in Revelation that is drawn from the writings comprising the Old Testament. I will first discuss what may be considered to be “major” motifs in Revelation before surveying other potential images and themes in Revelation drawn from the Old Testament. Where relevant, examples from Jewish writings of the Second Temple period will also be cited in order to illustrate similarities and differences between Revelation and more contemporary Jewish writings. In this section I will also interact with studies related to John’s use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation.

In the third main section (chapter four), I will examine the religious convictions that John appears to share with his readers. In the first part of this chapter, we will consider the relationship between John and his readers that would have facilitated shared religious convictions before assessing the imagery found in Revelation in light of teachings, titles, and devotional practices expressed elsewhere in other early Christian texts. This investigation will help to situate John’s religious convictions within the wider context of early Christianity.

The final main section (chapter five) will advocate a more complex approach to understanding Jesus as depicted in Revelation. Within this chapter, I will argue that John demonstrates creative interaction with and integration of material from Roman emperor worship, from the Old Testament writings, and from the early Christianity movement. By way of illustration, I will discuss three prominent components of John’s presentation of Jesus in light of these sources of imagery. In doing so, I intend to demonstrate the creative and complex way in which John expresses his convictions concerning Jesus.

CHAPTER TWO

JOHN, JESUS, AND THE ROMAN IMPERIAL CULT

Among the writings comprising the New Testament, the book of Revelation may be identified as the work providing the most extensive and direct interaction with Roman imperial claims and themes. In addition to questions related to the situation facing John and his readers, Roman emperor worship has often been seen as an important source for the imagery used by John in his depiction of Jesus in Revelation.

We begin, in the first part of this chapter, with an introduction to the relationship between Revelation and Roman imperial themes. Attention will be given to references in the text that appear to refer to Rome in order to establish the legitimacy of this relationship. Next, I will provide an assessment of the nature and features of Roman emperor worship, particularly as expressed within the context of Asia Minor. This section will deal both with primary source materials and with secondary studies related to the Roman imperial cult. In the final section, I will examine the ways in which John appears to draw from the Roman imperial cult in his presentation of Jesus. I will assess here the dominant theory pertaining to this relationship: namely, polemical parallelism. I will argue that John does indeed draw from imagery and rituals associated with Roman emperor worship, but his interaction with these themes is more complex than what is suggested by this dominant theory.

Preliminary Consideration: The Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation

Before we move to consider more carefully the nature and features of Roman emperor worship in Asia Minor, it must be established, at least in preliminary fashion, that the book of Revelation is indeed drawing upon the imagery and language related to the Roman imperial cult. I will provide here an introduction and initial assessment of Roman imperial themes that appear in Revelation. Discussion here will be offered on texts in Rev 1-3, 13, and 17-18 that evidently do just that. I will reserve detailed consideration of themes and imagery until the final section of

this chapter, but sufficient evidence will be offered here in order to establish the warrant for a closer investigation of this relationship.

The Seven Cities, Temples, and Emperor Worship

Generally speaking, the presence of emperor worship can be observed throughout the Roman Empire during the first two centuries C.E. By the end of the first century in Asia Minor in particular, provincial imperial cult temples had been established in at least three of the cities ostensibly addressed in the first three chapters of Revelation: Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus. Regardless of one's dating of the book of Revelation, two of these temples were established in the cities of Pergamum and Smyrna prior to the earliest typical date for the book of Revelation (during the time of Nero). If one accepts a later date for the book (during the time of Domitian, Trajan, or Hadrian), the presence of additional provincial cult centers enters the discussion. Beyond these provincial cult forms, evidence of local forms of emperor worship, such as altars and priesthoods, within the seven cities also exists. When considered alongside other writings of the time, John's apocalypse would not be unique in addressing the Roman imperial cult. The imperial cult, as will be seen, was a topic of discourse for a number of authors.

In addition to this general context, the reference to the "throne of Satan" has often been seen as a reference to the provincial imperial cult in Pergamum (2:13).¹ Other referents, such as the temple of Zeus have been suggested,² but Pergamum housed the first provincial imperial cult temple in Asia Minor. The later association of the throne of Satan with the beast (13:2) suggests that this connection may be in view here.

Finally, the various opponents mentioned in Rev 2-3 have often been interpreted as advocating accommodating stances toward emperor worship or as aiding in the persecution of Christians in relation to the imperial cult.³ Such

¹ See, for example, Ibson T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 458; Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 115.

² See Alfred Loisy, *L'Apocalypse de Jean* (Paris: Nourry, 1923), 95; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (ed. G. R. Beasley-Murray; NCB; London: Oliphants, 1974), 84.

³ See Philip A. Harland, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in Civic Life Among Associations (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 77 (2000): 101, 103; David A. DeSilva, "The Revelation to John: A Case Study in Apocalyptic

connections, though possible, are based upon reconstructions of the social situation in light of other potential references to emperor worship rather than explicit statements in the text itself.

The Beast from the Sea and Its Image

One of the chief passages cited as evidence of interaction with Roman emperor worship is Revelation 13. Within this chapter the two beasts from the land and the sea are introduced. These figures are featured prominently in the ongoing narrative of the opposition directed toward those who follow Jesus (13:1-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2, 12-14; 17:3, 7-14, 16-17; 19:19-20; 20:4, 10). The first beast from the sea is depicted as a ruler with both charismatic appeal and political authority (13:3-4, 7, 16-17; 16:14; 17:8, 12-14; 19:19-20). Although “wounded” (13:3), the recovery of the beast elicits the astonishment of the people, and the power of this beast causes the people to wonder (13:3-4).

This beast also has power over the military and the economy (13:7; 16-17), and it is violently opposed to the Lamb and his followers (13:7; 16:5-6; 17:14; 19:19-20; 20:4). A key feature of this opposition which forms a line of demarcation between followers of the Lamb and followers of the beast of the sea is, notably, the offering of worship (13:3-4, 8, 12-15; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). In subsequent chapters, followers of the Lamb are identified by their unwillingness to participate in the worship of the beast from the sea (14:9-11; 20:4).

This figure is generally regarded as reflecting the influence of the traditions from Daniel and other writings related to the antichrist as well as traditions pertaining to Leviathan and Behemoth.⁴ Although this beast stands as a literary character in the book of Revelation, it likely represents either the Roman emperor

Propaganda and the Maintenance of Sectarian Identity,” *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992): 384-385; Warren Carter, “Accommodating ‘Jezebel’ and Withdrawing John: Negotiating Empire in Revelation,” *Int* 63.1 (2009): 32-47; cf. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of John* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1.56-57; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 75; Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 240-241.

⁴ See Beale, *Revelation*, 680; L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (JSJSup 49; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 127, 142, 153. On the use of Daniel in Rev 13, see G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), 229-248.

himself or imperial power more broadly. The descriptions of the authority, reign, and power of the beast correspond with those associated with the Roman emperor in the first two centuries C.E.⁵ If this figure is intended to represent the Roman emperor, the connection with the worship of the image of the beast (13:12-15) suggests a reference to the Roman imperial cult.

The second beast functions within Revelation as a supporter of the power and rule of the first beast. Within the context of Rev 13, the beast from the land is said to exercise the authority of the first beast as well as cause all people, with the exception of the followers of the Lamb, to worship it (13:14-15; cf. 13:8). In leading this worship, the beast from the land performs signs and wonders, such as calling down fire from heaven and causing the image to speak (13:13-15). With this primary role related to the worship of the first beast, this may refer to the local priests of the imperial cult. The beast from the land causes people to receive the mark of the beast and excludes those who refuse from participating in buying and selling (13:16-17).

Babylon/Rome

Revelation 17 and 18 depict the fall of “Babylon.” Although not directly related to the imperial cult, several key elements indicate that a reference to Rome was intended on the part of John. First, the image of “Babylon the Great” (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) may be seen as a veiled reference to Rome.⁶ Originally denoting

⁵ Although often referred to as the *princeps*, the Roman emperor was viewed as a monarch with absolute power. Cf. Luke 23:2; John 19:12, 15; Acts 17:7.

⁶ A city still existed bearing the name “Babylon,” but most commentators consider the use in Revelation to be a symbolic naming of the city of Rome. See Beale, *Revelation*, 755; David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52a-c; Dallas: Word, 1997; Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 2:829-831, 3:936-937; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 89; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 194; John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), 142; Ben Witherington, III, *Revelation* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 220-222; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 57-58. Swete understands this to be a reference to Rome but still “far more than simply Rome” in H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1907), 26, 187. A reference to Rome is not universally understood, however, as some commentators have connected this to Jerusalem (see J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation* (AB 38; Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 264, 285; R. Van de Water, “Reconsidering the Beast from the Sea (Reve. 13:1),” *NTS* 46 (2000): 257) or to a rebuilt city of Babylon (see C.H. Dyer, “The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18,” *BSac* 144 (1987): 305-316, 433-449; Kenneth M. Allen, “The Rebuilding and Destruction of Babylon,” *BSac* 133 (1976): 19-27). Prior to the last two hundred years, interpretations generally viewed Babylon as symbolic or cryptic in some sense. Although critical scholarship tends to focus upon the relationship between Revelation and Rome, symbolic interpretations remain popular today,

the Mesopotamian power responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the name “Babylon” was later connected with the opponents of the people of God. During the first century, “Babylon” was used to refer ostensibly to Rome in other writings.⁷ It appears warranted to consider “Babylon” as a veiled reference to Rome in Revelation as well.⁸ This depiction of “Babylon” as a woman seated on the beast, dressed in purple and scarlet and with a name written on her forehead could also reflect Roman prostitutes or, more likely, the goddess Roma.⁹

Secondly, John may allude in 17:9 to a prominent feature related to the geography of Rome. Here, the “seven hills” could be taken as a reference to the well-known “seven hills” of Rome.¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that this particular phrase is not conclusive on its own, as the seven hills are interpreted symbolically within the text as representing seven kings (17:10).

Finally, the trade described in Rev 18 may be seen as reflecting trade during the first century Roman Empire, as demonstrated by Bauckham in his detailed study on the list of cargo.¹¹ Coupled with statements about the mark of the beast and

particularly in the North American context. At this juncture, there is sufficient justification to link it with the city of Rome.

⁷ For other examples, see 1 Peter 5:13 (the variant in ms 2138 reads Ρωμη); *Sib. Or.* 5:143, 159; 4 *Ezra* 3:1-2, 28-31; 15:44, 46, 60; 16:1; 2 *Bar* 10:2; 11:1; 67:7. For 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E. at the hands of the Romans is seen through the framework of the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.E. at the hands of the Babylonians. In similar fashion, the book of Revelation draws heavily from Daniel, a book that deals in large sections with the context of the Babylonian exile.

⁸ Fiorenza notes that one should not merely take this as a “code,” as John uses the term “to evoke a whole range of scriptural meanings” (see Fiorenza, *Vision of a Just World*, 89). Such caution is necessary, and it is not the intention of this section to advocate an interpretation of “Babylon” simply as a replacement for the name “Rome.”

⁹ See Richard Bauckham, “The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18,” in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; JSOTSup 122; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 53; Hanns Lilje, *Last Book of the Bible: The Meaning of the Revelation of St. John* (trans. Olive Wyon; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 222; but see also James Knight, “Was Roma the Scarlet Harlot? The Worship of the Goddess Roma in Sardis and Smyrna,” in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna* (ed. Richard S. Ascough; Studies in Christianity and Judaism 14; Waterloo (Ontario), Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 104-119. Touilleux suggests that this could reflect the worship of Cybele in Asia Minor (*L’Apocalypse et les Cultes de Domitien et de Cybele*, 86).

¹⁰ See Cicero, *Att.* 6.5; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.66-67; Martial 4.64; A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 57; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 617; Swete notes, “No reasonable doubt can be entertained as to the meaning of these words” (*The Apocalypse of St. John*, 220).

¹¹ See Richard Bauckham, “The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18,” 47-90; repr. in *Climax of Prophecy*, 338-383. On this particular issue, see also Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce*; D. Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” *HTR* 79 (1986): 100-126.

commerce (13:16-17), some have seen Revelation as depicting the economic implications of the imperial cult as connected with the wider trade of Rome. As the emperor alone would have possessed the level of power envisioned in John's apocalypse, it is likely that the figure of the beast has been modeled at least to a degree upon the Roman Emperor.

As can be observed in an initial examination of the text, there are enough factors that warrant exploration of these themes. Before we address further references in the text of Revelation that appear to draw from Roman emperor worship, we will first consider the nature and features of the Roman imperial cult in first century Asia Minor.

Roman Emperor Worship

Although John creates a coherent symbolic world throughout the book of Revelation, the symbols, imagery, and language are drawn from the larger literary and cultural contexts of his day.¹² Within Asia Minor, emperor worship played a significant role in the wider religious context, and, as I argued in the last section, details in the text of Revelation provide sufficient evidence that John was addressing themes and imagery associated with the Roman Empire. In this section I will provide an analysis of Roman emperor worship in the context of Asia Minor with a view toward the end of the first century C.E. Since scholarly opinion has varied greatly concerning the nature of the Roman imperial cult, analysis of the forms of emperor worship that would have been encountered by John and his recipients is necessary. In addition to this assessment of the nature of emperor worship, I will also draw attention to social and religious features, in particular, that John may be drawing from in Revelation.¹³

Discussion will proceed along the following lines: first, I will offer an explanation of introductory concerns relevant to the study of emperor worship in the first century C.E. Next, we will consider political and social elements. This subsection will help demonstrate the integration of emperor worship into the fabric of life in Asia Minor and the reasons for pressure upon Christians in Asia Minor

¹² See Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford, 1990), 37-52, 74-75.

¹³ Analysis of this relationship as it pertains to specific references in Revelation will be delayed until the third main section of this chapter.

related to emperor worship. Finally, we will turn our attention to the main “religious” features in the last subsection. Here, we will survey the honorific titles and cultic acts associated with emperor worship. This discussion, although focusing primarily upon Roman emperor worship, will anticipate the final section of this chapter, in which I will offer a more detailed discussion of the relationship between John’s depiction of Jesus in Revelation and Roman emperor worship.

Introductory Matters

Within the last century, the nature of the Roman imperial cult has been a subject of much debate. As a result, we must first address certain issues pertaining to interaction with the Greco-Roman primary sources before moving to examine the features of emperor worship in the first century C.E.

First, in some ways, it is inappropriate to speak of *the* Roman imperial cult. As Beard, North, and Price have shown, the worship of the Roman emperor was a diverse phenomenon throughout the Roman Empire.¹⁴ It is possible, and in some cases preferable, to distinguish between types of cult. As we will see, worship of the emperor took place in dedicated provincial cults, municipal cults, in the context of cults for the traditional gods, in important locations in the city, and in private homes. In addition to this diversity of context, the presence and practices of these cults increased and developed over time.¹⁵ In light of these factors, some may question whether it is even possible to investigate the worship of the emperor as a whole. If one attempts to assess the worship of the emperor while presupposing it to be a centralized, structured, and consistent system of worship, this analysis will prove difficult. If one attempts, however, to assess the phenomenon of emperor worship, diverse in its form yet organized around the central figure of the Roman emperor, analysis of the whole is possible. Our investigation will proceed under the latter approach, with certain cautions. In speaking about this pattern, “emperor worship,” “emperor cult,” and “Roman imperial cult” will be used to refer to the giving of cultic honors (in various and diverse forms) to the Roman emperor. “Provincial

¹⁴ Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 348.

¹⁵ Some cults showed amazing longevity, such as the cult of Tiberius at Lysia, as referenced in *IGR* 3.474. Others, such as the cults connected with Domitian, showed a degree of flexibility following his demise. Additionally, new practices and new cults contributed to change over time.

imperial cult” will be used to refer to cults under the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities, particularly in Asia Minor. “Municipal” and “civic” cults will be used to refer to cults located in individual cities and not under the authority of the provincial leadership. “Public” and “private” will also be used to distinguish between different contexts of cultic acts as necessary.

In addition to these considerations, a variety of sources must be consulted. Evidence may be found in surviving literary sources, inscriptions, architecture, and coins from the first two centuries C.E. It is diverse in language (both Latin and Greek), geographic location (throughout the Roman Empire), and time (spanning several centuries).¹⁶ This evidence is also fragmentary both in content as well as in physical condition. Additionally, one must weigh the biases of the sources themselves. The various sources by no means present a monolithic viewpoint toward the worship of the emperor. Individual authors, likewise, may show personal preferences toward or against a certain emperor or the entire system itself. Concern must also be given to the setting of the source, as distinctions may be made in different contexts.¹⁷

Third, we must admit that we lack the viewpoint of the “common person on the street.”¹⁸ The only access to the beliefs of the people is through the material evidence left behind. In some ways, this limits our investigation, as the sources only give information from a certain perspective. Some sources, such as coins, were issued by those possessing the authority to do so.¹⁹ Public inscriptions, in many

¹⁶ So noted by S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 4-5.

¹⁷ Certain contexts, as will be seen, were more conservative in the language used regarding the emperor. Friesen notes the tendency not to use θεός in provincial cults, a term that was used more broadly in other contexts. See Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 116; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 22-23, 34.

¹⁸ As Price notes, though, even a formal questioning of the “person on the street” may not yield the precise answers for which one would hope. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 5-6.

¹⁹ The level at which decisions were made regarding the coin types has been debated over the last century. Sutherland, for example, has argued for a high degree of control by the emperor from the time of Augustus onward. See C. H. V. Sutherland, *The Emperor and the Coinage: Julio-Claudian Studies* (London: Spink and Son, 1976), 5-33. Levick, however, has argued that those responsible for the minting would have played a more active role. The types utilized, however, would have been chosen according to what would have received approval from the emperor. See B. M. Levick, “Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage,” *Antichthon* 16 (1982): 104-116; and the response of Sutherland in C. H. V. Sutherland, “Compliment or Complement? Dr. Levick on Imperial Coin Types,” *NumC* 146 (1986): 85-93. At this juncture, it is important to note that the production of these coins would have been initiated within the government authority structures. For the “common person,” these coins would have provided symbols and communication concerning the policies and

cases, were set up by local authorities or the elite members of society. Caution is needed when examining the sources, but enough evidence exists that makes it possible to situate the cult within the larger cultural context. Although many of the sources find their origin in particular groups, the public nature of much of the evidence indicates a wider audience.²⁰ Likewise, the sheer number of sources associated with the worship of the emperor provides a rich pool for analysis.²¹

Next, one must give appropriate attention to the local context of the imperial cult. In the context of Asia Minor, for example, the provincial imperial cult tended to take on aspects of the local culture and was incorporated into the larger religious landscape of the city.²² For the present study, primary, though not exclusive, focus will be directed toward this context of Asia Minor.²³

Lastly, recent work regarding the worship of the Roman emperor has stressed the particular need to guard against certain presuppositions that arise from pursuing the study of the Roman imperial cult from a modern Christian perspective. Price's work, in particular, on the Roman imperial cult highlights several of the methodological shortcomings of past research.²⁴ Chief among these is the tendency to dismiss the Roman imperial cult as purely "political" in light of a definition of

rhetoric of the empire. Even for those unable to read Latin, the imagery on the coins would communicate certain aspects of the imperial reign. On the value of coins for the language and imagery in Revelation, see Janzen, "The Jesus of the Apocalypse"; David M. May, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Mark of the Beast in Revelation," *RevExp* 106 (2009): 83-98; and id., "Interpreting Revelation with Roman Coins: A Test Case, Revelation 6:9-11," *RevExp* 106 (2009): 445-465.

²⁰ Even for the illiterate, the imagery of coins, statues, and altars would have provided modes of communication of the ideas associated with the Roman imperial cult.

²¹ MacMullen notes the practice of inscribing things on stone "everywhere." See Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *AJP* 103.3 (1982): 233.

²² The provincial temple in Ephesus, for example, followed the Greek style and employed Hellenistic traditions in its construction. See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 67; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 87. Fears notes that the framework of the ruler cult in the east was "totally Greek." See J. Rufus Fears, "Ruler Worship," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome* (ed. Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 2:1011.

²³ Most scholars recognize a strong distinction especially between east and west in the history of the development of the cult, but common patterns may be seen. See Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 349. The Greek east is often a focus of study due to the prevalence of the cults in the area. See G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 116.

²⁴ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 10-16. Price notes that in spite of the number of articles and works written about the ruler cult little advance had taken place since those conducted in the early part of the twentieth century. See S. R. F. Price, "Between Man and God: Sacrifice in the Roman Imperial Cult," *JRS* 70 (1980): 28.

“religion” cast in the framework of Christian piety.²⁵ In that approach, the “authenticity” of religion is evaluated on the basis of religious emotion and personal attachment to the god.²⁶ As an alternative, Price proposes an approach based upon an evaluation of the rituals and symbols present within the cult system.²⁷ It is the intent of this study to situate appropriately the worship of the Roman emperor within the larger cultural and religious contexts within Asia Minor. As a result, consideration will be given not only to language used of the emperor and the assessment of devotion on the part of those participating in emperor worship but also to the relationship of emperor worship to the traditional cults and to its role in the city. After assessing the nature of emperor worship, we will turn our attention to its relationship with the presentation of Jesus in the book of Revelation.

The Nature and Impact of the Roman Imperial Cult

Although the presence of the Roman imperial cult is not generally debated, its nature and impact have been widely contested in scholarship.²⁸ For some, the Roman imperial cult was barely a religion; rather, it was a political tool wrapped in the guise of a religious cult that was designed to enhance the relationship between subject and ruler. For others, it was a legitimate religion, fully incorporated into the larger Greco-Roman religious context. Within this section, then, we will lay the groundwork for our study of Revelation with a general assessment of the nature and impact of Roman emperor worship.

Our starting point will be the political and social impact of the Roman imperial cult. Although the resulting political and social benefits have often been cited as evidence indicating the “non-religious” nature of emperor worship, the

²⁵ See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 10-11. Momigliano notes that this tendency was an attempt to explain in the modern context why men were willing to call other men “gods.” See Arnaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 95.

²⁶ See, for example, Martin Persson Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (trans. Herbert Jennings Rose; Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), 178; Arthur Darby Nock, “Deification and Julian: I,” *JRS* 47.1/2 (1957): 121.

²⁷ Price bases his approach on the work of Geertz. See Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (London: Fontana, 1993). Such an approach has also been adopted by Gradel and Friesen. See Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford Classical Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 4, 366; and Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 5-14.

²⁸ Within the past century, a number of articles, essays, and books have been published related to Roman emperor worship. Due to limits of space, discussion of the history of research in this area will not be given. For this, see Naylor, “The Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation,” 208-215.

presence of these features need not suggest that emperor worship was merely a political or civic institution. These features do provide, as we will see, a plausible explanation for pressures facing Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century C.E. and beyond.

From there we will move to the features of emperor worship that may be considered “religious” in nature due to the rituals and language used. These include such things as honorific titles, cult types, and ritual acts associated with emperor worship. The evidence cited within this subsection, in particular, will provide the basis for the discussion of the relationship between John’s presentation of Jesus and Roman emperor worship.

Political and Social Impact

One of the chief areas of consideration regarding the nature of the Roman imperial cult is the political benefit brought about as a result of the presence of emperor worship. Although much could be said regarding the political and social ramifications of the cult forms, I will briefly discuss these here in order to highlight the resulting political and social benefits both for Rome and for the provinces. Studies emphasizing this aspect, as we will see, are well supported.

Political Benefits

For many, especially among interpreters of the early part of the twentieth century, the political benefits of the Roman imperial cult are the most readily apparent aspect of the various cults. It becomes evident, as one considers the sources, that the Roman imperial cult did indeed serve to advance political ends and resulted in certain benefits for both Rome and the provinces. Attention will be directed to both in turn.

From the perspective of Rome, the worship of the imperial cult brought about a number of benefits. First of all, the cults provided a way for the residents of the provinces to express loyalty to the Roman Empire. Evidence for this may be seen in the requests for the first two provincial cults in Asia Minor. When a provincial cult was proposed for Augustus, the goddess Roma was included alongside Augustus as

the recipient of the cult.²⁹ Likewise, the cult center proposed for Tiberius was also dedicated to Livia as well as the Senate.³⁰ These cults, then, showed allegiance not simply to the person of the emperor but also toward the authority and power of the Roman Empire. Additionally, a distinction was made between the residents of the provinces and the Romans residing there. Dio notes that at the establishment of the provincial cult center at Pergamum cults to *Divus Iulius* were also established for the Roman citizens.³¹ Whether dedicated to deified emperors or the living one, these cults helped to provide a sense of religious unity with the empire for both Roman and non-Roman.

Within the west, many scholars note the greater role played by the Roman emperor from Augustus onward.³² In light of the success of emperor worship in the east, the western provinces were encouraged to follow a similar route. Nock argues that Rome “created the institution *de novo* as an instrument for the spreading of her culture.”³³ Accordingly, the worship of the emperor in the western provinces should be regarded as developing along a different trajectory than in the east.³⁴

By the time of Trajan, cultic acts directed toward the emperor could be used as a test of loyalty toward the Roman Empire as a whole.³⁵ Magie notes,

The new cult, furthermore, provided a means, hitherto unknown, of establishing a general loyalty in which all could participate, the worship of the God-Emperor. In his ‘common festival’ all might take part, and in worshipping him, together with Roma, the province as a whole placed itself under the protection of Rome and professed allegiance to the *Imperator* who ruled the known world. This method of maintaining the loyalty of

²⁹ Suetonius, *Aug.* 52.

³⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.

³¹ Dio 51.20.6-8; see Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, Conn.: American Philological Association, 1931; repr., New York: Scholars Press, 2000), 148.

³² M. P. Charlesworth stresses this as an “innovation” of Augustus in the western provinces that was a “political not a religious creation” (see Martin Percival Charlesworth, “Some Observations on Ruler-Cult Especially in Rome,” *HTR* 28.1 (1935): 27-28).

³³ Arthur Darby Nock, “Religious Developments from the Close of the Republic to the Death of Nero,” in *The Augustan Empire, 44 B.C. - A.D. 70* (vol. 10 of *The Cambridge Ancient History*; ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth; London: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 486.

³⁴ This is not to say that there was no precedent for emperor worship prior to the establishment of official cults. Emperor worship was accommodated more easily within the Greek east, however. See Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (4 vols.; EPRO 108; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 1.1:92.

³⁵ See, for example, Pliny, *Ep.* 96.

Rome's subjects, which originated in western Asia Minor, was gradually extended to the other provinces as well.³⁶

In addition to being an expression of loyalty, the Roman imperial cult also provided a certain religious unity to the Roman Empire. Regarding the imperial cult Nilsson writes, "If the Roman State, the Empire, looked for a form of religious expression, the imperial cult was the only one they could find to set forth the feeling of the unity and greatness of the Empire and of loyalty towards it and its ruler."³⁷ The Roman imperial cult offered, then, the best attempt at providing a unifying religious force in the Roman empire. As such, the Roman imperial cult served political ends by providing additional unity within the empire.

For the individual emperor, the Roman imperial cult could likewise be used to solidify one's position. Several examples of this may be set forward, beginning with Augustus, that suggest political motivations behind supposed "religious" actions. First, the focus upon Julius Caesar as *Divus Iulius* helped to consolidate the claims of Augustus as the adopted heir of Caesar.³⁸ Augustus, then, was a *divi filius*,³⁹ and such a claim helped to further establish his position. Additionally, a change in his policy also shows political expediency. Earlier in his political career, Augustus was forced to take a more moderate approach, in contrast to Mark Antony in the east.⁴⁰ After the consolidation of his power, however, Augustus accepted the honors offered by the province of Asia. For Mark Antony, there was incentive to delay recognition of the deification of Caesar, as this would have given further support to Augustus.⁴¹ When Antony eventually accepted the position of *flamen* to *Divus Iulius*, Cicero challenged this move as being merely politically expedient.⁴²

Although the Roman imperial cult could be used for political gain, general criticism was directed toward emperors who overemphasized their status as divine. Within the first century C.E., three emperors in particular are condemned in the

³⁶ David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the End of the Third Century After Christ* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 1.452.

³⁷ Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 177-178.

³⁸ See L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 92; John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 65-66.

³⁹ L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 106.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 139.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 82.

⁴² Cicero, *Phil.* 2.43.111.

literature for an overestimation of their own status: Caligula, Nero, and Domitian.⁴³ Caligula is perhaps the most prominent example. He is noted for his dressing in the garb of the gods,⁴⁴ the alleged attempt to appropriate the cult of Apollo at Miletus,⁴⁵ and the attempt to dedicate the Jerusalem Temple cult to himself.⁴⁶ Additionally, he is accused of demanding that worship be directed toward himself.⁴⁷ Nero, likewise, is said to have appointed a group of soldiers to lead applause, during which he was hailed as Apollo.⁴⁸ The statue of Nero set up in the temple of Mars Ultor was “on a divine scale,” suggesting an inflated view of himself and his relationship with the deity.⁴⁹ Domitian, finally, was noted for his demand to be addressed as “our lord and our god.”⁵⁰ In each of these cases, the claims of divinity are seen as part of the overall negative nature of the character of the particular emperor.⁵¹ With respect to the political nature of the Roman imperial cult, these assessments are particularly helpful in illustrating the bounds of propriety. The promotion of the cults of past emperors and the worship of the living emperor alongside Roma or the Senate were acceptable; claims of independent divinity on the part of the living emperor were not. Such an evaluation, it appears, gives credence to the assessment of the cult as a political tool, acceptable for promotion as long as overt claims of divinity are not made on the part of the living emperor.

As attention is turned to the context of the Greek east, further evidence of political benefits may be seen. In looking for a means to explain the nature of the Roman imperial cult in the east, scholars have turned to the client-benefactor relationship as an explanatory framework.⁵² In this model, the imperial cult provided the medium of exchange between the emperor and the people. The people, in response to the advantages received as a result of the rule of the emperor, were able

⁴³ See John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), 91; Momigliano, *On Pagans*, 99.

⁴⁴ Dio 59.26.5, 10; Philo, *Leg.* 78-92; Suetonius, *Cal.* 52.

⁴⁵ Dio 59.28.1.

⁴⁶ Philo, *Leg.* 346.

⁴⁷ Philo, *Leg.* 357.

⁴⁸ Dio 61.20.5.

⁴⁹ D. L. Jones, “Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult,” *ANRW* 23.2.1029; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.8.

⁵⁰ Dio 67.4.7; Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.2.

⁵¹ See Momigliano, *On Pagans*, 99.

⁵² See Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, 12, 112.

to express appreciation and continued loyalty through the request to build a temple, and the emperor would return the kindness to the people by the granting of this request. This medium of exchange would also anticipate the future continuation of benefit for both people and emperor. Precedent for this may be seen in the cults of prominent Romans that existed prior to the development of the worship of Augustus. Bowersock notes, “Honours commonly took the form of praise for benefaction, sometimes actually received and sometimes simply anticipated. A Roman might be called a city’s benefactor, its saviour, or its founder; or, in more instances than is often realized, he might be assigned a cult.”⁵³ The cult of the Roman emperor displaced these earlier cult forms, and, from the time of Augustus onward, these cult forms focused nearly exclusively on the Roman emperor and the imperial family.⁵⁴

In these ways, then, the Roman imperial cult did provide political benefits for Rome and for the Greek east. It offered an additional expression of loyalty and unity within the Roman Empire and, in turn, resulted in certain benefits for those under the authority of the Roman Empire.

Civic Integration

Although the dominant viewpoint from the first part of the twentieth century onward was that the Roman imperial cult functioned largely as a tool of politics and played little role as a legitimate “religion,”⁵⁵ scholars have noted the way in which the Roman imperial cult was integrated into the life of the city.⁵⁶ In some cases, the evidence from inscriptions and archaeology indicate that the arrival of provincial imperial cults served to transform the city (and the surrounding area) in significant ways. Literary sources and coins likewise indicate that the Roman imperial cult played an important role in the life of the city. I will discuss contributions in several areas within this section. First, the establishment of provincial imperial cults provided opportunity for civic pride to be expressed. Secondly, the Roman imperial cult transformed civic space in the building of imperial temples. Lastly, the Roman

⁵³ Ibid. 12.

⁵⁴ See G. W. Bowersock, “The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence,” in *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World* (vol. 3 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*; ed. Ben F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders; London: SCM, 1982), 171-172.

⁵⁵ So Bowersock, “Perceptions and Persistence,” 172.

⁵⁶ The works of Friesen and Price are particularly helpful in this regard. See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros* and Price, *Rituals and Power*.

imperial cult influenced the structure of time through calendar changes, festivals, and other celebrations.

Civic Pride. After the establishment of the first provincial cult of Asia Minor in Pergamum, the honor of being selected as the location for additional cult centers was sought by the cities of the province. The imperial cult, as may be observed from this time onward, became an element in the competition between cities.⁵⁷ The request for the second provincial cult was made to Tiberius, and approval, on the basis of the precedent set by Augustus, followed.⁵⁸ The actual building process was delayed several years, as the location within the province was yet to be determined. Tacitus provides the main testimony for this situation.⁵⁹ The case went before the Senate, and arguments were advanced by the various cities. In the course of the proceedings, the cities had opportunity to advance reasons for their selection. These included geographic,⁶⁰ economic,⁶¹ historical,⁶² political,⁶³ and religious factors.⁶⁴ Ultimately Smyrna and Sardis were the finalists, with the honor being granted to the former.⁶⁵

In the closing decades of the first century C.E., the rewarding of another provincial cult to Ephesus provided opportunity for further competition and innovation in the relationships between the cities. Two significant features deserve

⁵⁷ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 352; Price also notes the level of cooperation present as well within the system (see *Rituals and Power*, 126-132). Tacitus records the warning of the Senate regarding allowing religious matters, such as the building of temples to various deities, to become an opportunity for selfish gains (see *Ann.* 3.63).

⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.15.

⁵⁹ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.55-56.

⁶⁰ The bounty of natural resources (Sardis) and the lack of earthquakes (Halikarnassos) were advanced.

⁶¹ Hypaepa, Tralles, Laodicea, and Magnesia were viewed as “inadequate to the task,” presumably for the lack of resources to accomplish the building project.

⁶² Ilium, for example, appealed to Troy; Smyrna traced its history back to being founded by Tantalus, Jove, or Theseus.

⁶³ Local support for Roman military advances (broadly asserted by the cities), treaties (Sardis), and the erection of a temple to the city of Rome (Smyrna) were advanced in support of various cities.

⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that one of the chief considerations was the need for appropriate space for the imperial cult within the larger religious context of the city. Ephesus and Miletus were ruled out because they housed the sanctuaries of Diana and Apollo, respectively. Pergamum was eliminated due to the presence of the temple to Augustus and Roma.

⁶⁵ According to Tacitus, it was the consideration of the goodwill shown historically toward Rome that tipped the scale in favor of Smyrna.

consideration. First, a series of inscriptions offers insight into the relationship of surrounding cities to the provincial cult.⁶⁶ These inscriptions feature dedications from these cities to the provincial temple. Of particular interest is the way in which these inscriptions provided opportunity for these cities to highlight their own status with respect to Rome and to the provincial cult.⁶⁷ Aphrodisias, for example, highlighted its status as a “free and autonomous” city⁶⁸ and its friendship with the emperor.⁶⁹ Beyond highlighting their own status, these inscriptions place the individual cities in the role of benefactor to the imperial cult.⁷⁰ Although this temple was located in Ephesus and was of advantage to the city itself, it was nevertheless properly the possession of the province of Asia, and other cities took the opportunity to highlight their own status.

The second major feature in the granting of a provincial imperial temple to Ephesus was the adoption of the language of the “neokorate.” On this issue, Friesen’s work is particularly helpful in illuminating the innovation regarding the use of this term.⁷¹ Prior to the use by Ephesus, the term νεώκορος was used primarily with reference to a particular office within the local temple cult. With the awarding of the provincial cult to Asia, the term began to take on a broader meaning with reference to the role of the city itself. Ephesus, home now to temples dedicated to Artemis and to the Roman emperor, began to promote its status as “twice neokoros.”⁷² With the multiplication of temples during the first half of the second

⁶⁶ *IvEph* 2.232-242; 5.1498; 6.2048. These include dedications from Aizanoi (2:232, 232A), Aphrodisias (2.233), Keretapa (2.234), Klazomenai (2:235), Philadelphia (2:236), Stratonikia (2.237), Silandos (2.238), Teos (2.239), Kyme (2.240), Tmolos (2.241), Makedones Hyrkanoi (5.1498), and Synaos (6.2048).

⁶⁷ Friesen offers a lengthy and helpful discussion of these inscriptions. See *Twice Neokoros*, 29-49.

⁶⁸ *IvEph* 2.233 lines 7-9: ἐλεύθερος ὢν καὶ αὐτόνομος ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τῇ τῶν Σεβ[ασ]τῶν χάριτι; likewise also Stratonika; see *IvEph* 2.237 lines 6-9.

⁶⁹ ὁ φιλοκαῖσαρ Ἀφροδισι[έων] δῆμος.

⁷⁰ See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 39-40.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 50-59. Friesen locates the development of this term under Domitian. Contra Pick, who posits an otherwise unknown temple of Claudius in B. Pick, “Die Neokorien von Ephesos,” in *Corolla Numismatica. Essays in Honour of Barclay V. Head* (ed. George Francis Hill; London: Oxford, 1906), 235.

⁷² After the granting of a second provincial temple to Ephesus during the reign of Domitian, the formulaic phrase τῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης μητροπόλεως τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ δις νεωκόρου τῶν Σεβαστῶν appeared in a number of inscriptions. For examples, see *IvEph* 3.613A, 642, 644, 649, 661, 664B, 665, 666A, 686, 687, 689, 696, 697B, 721, 726, 728, 730, 985, 986.

century C.E., the term was used broadly by the other cities of Asia Minor to highlight their status.⁷³

The Roman imperial cult provided, then, an important point for competition and cooperation between the cities. For the cities that received provincial imperial cults, it became an important mark of prestige within the province. For the surrounding cities, though, participation was still possible. Although the imperial cult provided occasions for inter-city rivalry, it would be wrong to evaluate these simply as “bickerings” between the cities.⁷⁴ There was nevertheless cooperation between the cities, and festivals and celebrations became opportunities for cooperation, as representatives from other cities would travel to participate in the festivities.⁷⁵

Civic Space. Regarding the construction of buildings associated with the Roman imperial cult, Bowersock has noted,

Although it is absurd to state, as A. H. M. Jones once did, that every time someone was deified, a new temple was built for him, it is still true that the construction of new temples for the imperial cult is probably the most conspicuous form of building activity for religious purposes in the Roman Empire of the second and third centuries.⁷⁶

Even prior to the second century, the construction of a number of buildings and altars related to the imperial cult may be seen. One of the aspects highlighted in the works of Price and Friesen is the way in which the arrival of a provincial cult served to transform the use of space within the city.⁷⁷ Regarding the typical placement of the imperial cult, Price notes, “Imperial temples and sanctuaries were generally located in the most prominent and prestigious positions available within the cities.”⁷⁸ The city of Ephesus can be seen as a representative of this. During the reign of Augustus, major reconstruction of the upper square took place. In this reconstruction, a

⁷³ *IvSm.* 2,1.594, 640, 665-667, 696; *IGR* 4.1388; *IvP* 2.461; see Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 57-58.

⁷⁴ So Price, *Rituals and Power*, 126.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 126-132. An inscription regarding the establishment of games at Mytilene notes connections with other cities (see *IGR* 4.39).

⁷⁶ Bowersock, “Perceptions and Resistance,” 173.

⁷⁷ Price *Rituals and Power*, 136-146; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 59-75, 121-137. For two case studies, see Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 77-103.

⁷⁸ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 136. These include such locations as the city center (Cibyra Minor, Sidyma, and Cestus), the highest point (Pergamum), or in other prominent locations.

municipal temple to Augustus may have been established in the square.⁷⁹ Later, during the time of Domitian, a provincial temple was established in Ephesus. This temple was built just off of the main square, with a façade on the main street.⁸⁰ Within this façade, figures of Attis and Isis have been found. Friesen has argued that the remainder of the figures likely included gods and goddesses from both east and west.⁸¹ By this, we see that the imperial temple built during Domitian's reign conspicuously associates other deities with the emperor in a prominent location within the city.⁸²

Beyond these temples, the presence of emperor worship may be seen in other parts of the city. One could have found altars and statues in various locations. Statues could be found in porticos, as an inscription from Ephesus indicates.⁸³ Some statues, like those at Sardis, Pergamum, and Ephesus, were quite large.⁸⁴ Such statues would have provided visual reminders of the power and place of the emperor. Likewise, space was dedicated in the gymnasium.⁸⁵ Price has also noted the presence of an altar to Augustus in the council house at Miletus.⁸⁶ Additionally, at Ephesus, the building of the harbor bath-gymnasium may have been connected with the imperial cult, as Friesen has argued.⁸⁷ This bathhouse, built following the Olympian model rather than other more localized forms, appears to have served the purpose of providing facilities for the Ephesian games conducted in honor of Domitian.⁸⁸

Finally, we may observe the presence of emperor worship within the context of the traditional cults. As already noted, the tendency within the Roman imperial

⁷⁹ *IvEph* 3.309; see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 140.

⁸⁰ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 140.

⁸¹ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 72-73, 75.

⁸² For other examples of civic transformation, see Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 105; Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (trans. Alan Shapiro; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 298.

⁸³ See *IvEph* 2.404=SEG XXVI 1269; see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 140-143.

⁸⁴ See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 187; Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 50. The statue of Titus at Ephesus, for example, appears to have been seven to eight meters tall.

⁸⁵ See *IGR* III 933; *AvP* 6.56-58; see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 144.

⁸⁶ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 138.

⁸⁷ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 121-137.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 134. The dating of this particular structure is debated, but even if it is not dated to the time of Domitian, inscriptions nevertheless connect it with the Σεβαστοί. See *IvEph* 4.1125, 1155.

cult was to build new structures to facilitate worship instead of taking over pre-existing temples. There were instances, however, where the emperor and members of the imperial family were honored within the confines of temples dedicated to other deities, a practice that began with Julius Caesar and continued through the first two centuries C.E.⁸⁹ In Ephesus, it appears that there may have been an adjacent space dedicated to Augustus and other members of the imperial family.⁹⁰ In Rome, an image of Augustus was placed in the temple of Mars while his temple was constructed.⁹¹ In Pergamum, a room was dedicated in the temple of Asclepius to the Σεβαστοί that was used in the imperial festival.⁹² One question that arises, then, is the significance of the inclusion of the emperor within cultic space dedicated to the traditional gods. For some scholars, the placement of the images of the emperors in side rooms served to subordinate the emperors to the traditional deities. Nock argues that the full-fledged sharing of temples, in this regard, was relatively rare.⁹³ In similar fashion, Price argues that the imagery was carefully incorporated in such a way as not to supplant the traditional deities.⁹⁴ Friesen has challenged this view, however. He argues,

The placement of the emperor in any given precinct should not be understood as a statement about the general status of emperors and gods. It is, instead, a much more modest statement about the emperor's place in that particular precinct which is dedicated to someone else. The question is not so much divine ontology as hospitality and protocol.⁹⁵

Friesen's assessment appears to be sound. In evaluating the rituals and language involved in the Roman imperial cult, there appears to be an attempt to integrate the

⁸⁹ See Dio 43.14.6; for a further consideration, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 146-156; Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Zeph Stewart; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1.202-251.

⁹⁰ *IBM* 522; *IvEph* 2.412. It appears that this space shared a common wall with the Artemision. Nock notes that this does not indicate a sharing of the same temple. See *Essays*, 1:225. So also Price, *Rituals and Power*, 254.

⁹¹ Dio 56.46.4-5. Nock views this as a "striking" occurrence (*Essays*, 1:225).

⁹² Boehringer identifies a square hall on the eastern side of the Asclepieion as the hall for the Caesars. See Erich Boehringer, "Pergamon," in *Neue Deutsche Ausgrabungen im Mittelmeergebiet und im Vorderen Orient* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag GmbH, 1959), 158. See *IGR* 4.508 = *AvP* 8, 3.85; see also Price, *Rituals and Power*, 148, 252-253.

⁹³ Nock, *Essays*, 1:233.

⁹⁴ "...there was general concern to avoid elevating the emperor too high. His statues did not rival or displace those of the traditional deities." Price, *Rituals and Power*, 147.

⁹⁵ *Twice Neokoros*, 74.

worship of the emperor into the larger religious context and to avoid the replacement of traditional cults with the imperial cult forms. As we will see, the emperor was shown as consciously upholding the traditional religions, and cult forms appear to have been modeled upon the rituals dedicated to the traditional gods. Friesen rightly notes, in this regard, that both traditional deities and the Roman emperors could have complementary places within the larger religious context.⁹⁶

As one surveys the presence of the imperial cult in the larger civic context, then, the transformation of civic space may be seen. New buildings dedicated to honoring the emperors were constructed. Areas of cities were redesigned, and places of worship were incorporated into larger public spaces. Even temples of traditional deities could be expanded or modified to create space for the emperors and the imperial family. In these ways, the worship of the emperor was incorporated physically and visibly into the life of the city.

Civic Time. Accompanying the physical changes brought about by the Roman imperial cult were changes in the ordering of time throughout the year. The overall structure of the calendar year was changed in honor of the Roman emperor. During the time of Augustus, the cities in Asia made a decree related to the ordering of time in which the calendar was made to reflect the birth of the god (θεός) Augustus.⁹⁷ In addition to this overall restructuring, months of the calendar were also renamed. Suetonius notes the renaming of September and October as “Germanicus” and “Domitianus” by Domitian.⁹⁸ The dating of a particular year could likewise be correlated with the reigning emperor. A series of ostraca found in Thebes contains references to dates based upon the year of the emperor.⁹⁹ Although not connected explicitly with the Roman imperial cult, these examples nevertheless show the reach of the Roman emperor’s authority into day-to-day activities.

Beyond changes in the calendar, the Roman imperial cult also brought with it associated festivals and celebrations. These festivals and celebrations provided

⁹⁶ See *Twice Neokoros*, 74-75.

⁹⁷ *OGIS* 458.

⁹⁸ Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.3; this may explain, in part, why “Germanicus” was removed from certain inscriptions after Domitian’s death. Although used by other emperors as a title, the term was favored by Domitian. See also Martial 8.4.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Paul Martin Meyer, *Ostraka der Sammlung Deissmann* (vol. 2 of *Griechische Texte aus Ägypten*; Berlin: Weidmann, 1916), nos. 36a, 39.

opportunity, as already noted, for civic cooperation as well as widespread participation within the city.¹⁰⁰ They could occur at regular intervals both annually¹⁰¹ and bi-annually,¹⁰² as well as less frequently.¹⁰³ Some celebrations were connected with the birthday of the emperor.¹⁰⁴ Such celebrations could involve, though not exclusively, music or athletics as the focus.¹⁰⁵ The Pergamene games, for example, demonstrate an important connection with the imperial cult. *IGR* 4.1064 refers to the games established at Pergamum, and the high priest of Roma and Augustus was connected with these games.¹⁰⁶ The relationship between these games and others associated with the κοινὰ Ῥωμαίων is somewhat debated, but the link between the celebration of the games in Pergamum and the imperial cult located there can be sustained.¹⁰⁷ These celebrations took place in the public arena and involved people from various social strata. As Alföldy notes, the “festivals, games, performances, processions and public meals” provided good reason for the popularity of the cult, as these were shared not just by the elite but by other members of society as well.¹⁰⁸ Such celebrations also became occasions for acts of generosity in providing food for all the people or funds for the festival itself.¹⁰⁹ These public games and festivals not only marked significant events within the course of the year but also offered entertainment, food, and important opportunities for participation to those within the city.

¹⁰⁰ See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 102-107.

¹⁰¹ *IGR* 4.1608c.

¹⁰² *IGR* 4.850.

¹⁰³ *IGR* 4.579; 654.

¹⁰⁴ *IGR* 4.1608c; 1666.

¹⁰⁵ So Price, *Rituals and Power*, 104.

¹⁰⁶ So Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 115. See also the connection of the priest with the games in *IvEph* 7,2.3825.

¹⁰⁷ For discussion of this matter, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 104-105; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 114-116.

¹⁰⁸ Alföldy, “Subject and Ruler,” 255.

¹⁰⁹ On the former, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 113. On the latter, see *IGR* 4.947 and 948; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 62. Josephus notes the generosity of Herod in relation to festivals surrounding the dedication of Caesarea. See *Ant.* 16.137-141.

Social Role of the Imperial Cult

In addition to the role that the Roman imperial cult played within the city as a whole, the cult also played a significant role socially as it affected status and relationships. One of the effects of the establishment of the Roman imperial cult in a city was the creation of new positions, which offered opportunities for members of the society and, for some, a means of improving their own social status. Friesen's work in this area has helped to illuminate the various office holders in Ephesus.¹¹⁰ One of his chief contributions is his collection of the numerous references to "high priests," "high priestesses," and "Asiarchs" from that time period in Asia Minor.¹¹¹ Both inscriptions and coins commemorate the service of these individuals, and it becomes clear, in assessing these references, that the priestly office was an important role.¹¹² It appears that the individuals serving in these roles typically came from the wealthier classes, and the multiplication of cults in Asia Minor provided additional opportunity for involvement.¹¹³ Women were also able to serve in priestly roles in the imperial cult.¹¹⁴ Beyond these official positions, it appears that other offices existed that were based upon those found in traditional cults. Roles such as the θεολόγος,¹¹⁵ ὕμνωδός,¹¹⁶ ἱεροφάντης,¹¹⁷ and σεβαστοφάντης¹¹⁸ are attested. These would have furnished opportunity for social involvement and advancement.¹¹⁹ Although this dynamic existed, it does not necessarily indicate that the religious

¹¹⁰ See *Twice Neokoros*, 76-113; 169-208.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 169-208.

¹¹² Friesen notes over 140 references to "high priests" alone. Additionally, Friesen argues against the standard view that "Asiarchs" also served as priests in the imperial cult. Though not conclusive, as there is evidence of some priestly functions, he provides ample reason to doubt the traditional assessment and to view the role as dealing more with municipal responsibilities (see *Twice Neokoros*, 77, 92-112). The difficulty in assessing the role as either religious or political may be due to overlapping functions that were more common in that day.

¹¹³ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 81; Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 357.

¹¹⁴ Friesen notes forty-two references to "high priestesses." See *Twice Neokoros*, 81-89; and id., *Imperial Cults*, 42-43.

¹¹⁵ Of Artemis: *IvEph* 1a.27.295; of the imperial cult: *IvEph* 7.1.3015; *IGR* 4.353; *IvSm* 2,1.594.

¹¹⁶ Of Artemis: *IvEph* 1a.27.295; of the imperial cult: *IvEph* 7.2.4336; *IGR* 4.353, 1608c.

¹¹⁷ *Ath.Mitt.* 24 (1899), 429.

¹¹⁸ *IvEph* 6.2061 (statue of T. Flavius Monatus), 2063; *IGR* 3.230; *Ath.Mitt.* 24 (1899), 429; *IvSm* 2,1.591. Pleket argues that this was modelled upon roles in the traditional cults and would have involved the revealing of the imperial image in the context of the imperial mysteries. See H. W. Pleket, "An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries," *HTR* 58.4 (1965): 345.

¹¹⁹ Bowersock notes that these offices would have provided opportunity to raise the status of a family within only three generations. See "Perceptions and Persistence," 172.

elements present in the imperial cult were mere pretence, as priestly roles within the traditional cults could likewise be sources of prestige within the culture.

Beyond these positions in the imperial cults, there is also evidence of participation on the part of guilds and associations. Involvement, in this area, appears to be private, in that these associations participated in the Roman imperial cult apart from the public festivals, and voluntary, in that there was not official mandate for doing so. Harland's work has been particularly helpful in this regard as he has examined a variety of associations with respect to the Roman imperial cult.¹²⁰ These associations could involve religious, economic, ethnic, and familial relationships.¹²¹ Within the inscriptions that relate to these associations, evidence may be seen which links them to the worship of the Roman emperor. In some cases these associations appear to have been formed to play a particular role with respect to the Roman imperial cult. By the time of Hadrian, at least, it seems that an association of "hymn-singers" had been formed.¹²² One inscription from Ephesus also refers to those singing hymns in honor of the emperor.¹²³ Other associations not connected directly with the Roman imperial cult may likewise be observed. *IvEph* 2.213 speaks of an association of Demetriasts in Ephesus.¹²⁴ This inscription deals with an appeal to allow the practices of the group to continue, which had been permitted under previous authority. These practices include both "mysteries" and "sacrifices."¹²⁵ In this case, these are directed to Demeter alongside the "Sebastoi gods."¹²⁶ For this association, the *Sebastoi* could be incorporated into the cultic life of the group. For others, Harland notes that group identification could be stated with respect to the imperial cult.¹²⁷ A group of physicians, for example, identify

¹²⁰ See Harland, "Honouring the Emperor"; and id., "Honours and Worship: Emperors, Imperial Cults, and Associations at Ephesus (first to third centuries C.E.)," *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 25 (1996): 319-334; and id., "Imperial Cults within Local Cultural Life: Associations in Roman Asia," *Ancient History Bulletin/Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 17 (2003): 85-107.

¹²¹ Harland, "Honours and Worship," 334n3. He also notes that the nature of associations could overlap.

¹²² *IvEph* 3.742, 921. See Harland, "Imperial Cults," 93n29.

¹²³ See *IvEph* 1a.18d lines 11-19. As Harland notes, this inscription provides evidence of hymn-singers before the time of Claudius. See "Imperial Cults," 94n29.

¹²⁴ Harland, "Imperial Cults," 90-93; Nock simply dismisses this in *Essays*, 1:248.

¹²⁵ *IvEph* 2.213 line 3: Μυστήρια καὶ θυσίαι.

¹²⁶ lines 4-6: ...Δήμητρι Καρποφόρῳ καὶ Θεσμοφόρῳ καὶ θεοῖς Σεβαστοῖς...

¹²⁷ Harland, "Honours and Worship," 327; and id., "Imperial Cults," 97-98.

themselves as “the physicians who sacrifice to the forefather Asklepios and to the *Sebastoi*.”¹²⁸ Although the inscriptions indicate at least some level of public acknowledgement of their involvement, it is unlikely, as Harland notes, that there was an expectation of acknowledgement from the Roman emperor.¹²⁹ For these associations, participation in the cult was voluntary and not directly linked with any official offices of the imperial cult.

One of the claims of a previous generation of scholars was that the Roman imperial cult could be seen largely as an institution of the elite ruling class.¹³⁰ It appears, rather, that involvement in emperor worship was more widespread.¹³¹ Although leading members of society more typically held the official positions in the provincial imperial cult, the festivals and public celebrations offered occasions for participation on a broader scale. Celebrations such as these took place on a stage that would have incorporated more than simply the elite class.¹³² Beyond this, private interest in the worship of the Roman emperor has been indicated by household shrines¹³³ and miniature sculptures¹³⁴ depicting the emperor and other members of the imperial family that have surfaced. In spite of the likelihood that underlying motivations varied, participation could be spontaneous. Following the death of Julius Caesar, as recounted by Dio Cassius, one group in Rome led the way in directing cultic acts toward the deceased.¹³⁵ In this case, the group set up an altar on the site of the pyre and offered sacrifices to Caesar as to a god.¹³⁶ Suetonius likewise

¹²⁸ *IvEph* 3.719: [οἱ] θύοντες τῷ προπάτορι Ἀσκληπιῷ καὶ τοῖς Σεβαστοῖς ἰατροί.

¹²⁹ See Harland, “Honours and Worship,” 328.

¹³⁰ See, for example, Adolf Deissmann, who refers to it as “die Krönung der Kultur der herrschenden Schichten,” in *Licht*, 287.

¹³¹ See Robert Turcan, “La promotion du sujet par le culte du souverain,” in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Alastair Small; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 17; Ann Arbor: Thomson-Shore, 1996), 51-62; Géza Alföldy, “Subject and Ruler, Subjects and Methods: An Attempt at a Conclusion,” in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Alastair Small; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 17; Ann Arbor: Thompson-Shore, 1996), 255; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 108.

¹³² See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 109.

¹³³ On household cults, see below.

¹³⁴ See Elizabeth Bartman, *Ancient Sculptural Copies in Miniature* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 19; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 28. Ovid also acknowledges the receipt of a “Caesar” alongside another “Caesar” in *Ex Ponto* 2.8. He refers to these as “gods” (*deos*). It is unclear if they served any cultic purpose, but the use of religious language to refer to these miniatures is intriguing, however.

¹³⁵ Dio 44.51.1.

¹³⁶ Θύειν τε ἐπ’ αὐτῷ καὶ κατάρχεσθαι τῷ Καίσαρι ὡς καὶ θεῷ ἐπεχείρουν.

testifies to popular sacrifices and vows before Caesar (1.85). Both of these authors indicate a response involving some forms of religious ritual apart from the sanctioning of the local authority. Publicly and privately the Roman imperial cult reflected the diversity that existed in the Roman Empire. Participation, although differing in degree, could involve a wide range of individuals both in a particular locale and throughout the empire.¹³⁷ Turcan notes,

Collectivement donc, dans la vie publique et dans l'art officiel, les sujets de l'Empire finissent par affirmer leur existence et leur personnalité par la religion du souverain qui transcende toutes les hiérarchies de la pyramide socio-politique ou socio-administrative. C'est leur pluralité qui sert à glorifier l'universalité de l'Empire, mais réciproquement cette pluralité fait valoir leur irréductible originalité et coïncide, par conséquent, avec un pluralisme national.¹³⁸

We can therefore see that ancient sources, in their descriptions of participation, move us beyond some of the claims expressed in the scholarship of the first part of the twentieth century. More than simply a political tool on the margins of city life, the Roman imperial cult was integrated into the larger social matrix. Involvement was not limited to the few on the upper end of the social spectrum; rather, the entire city could share in the celebrations associated with emperor worship. The Roman imperial cult was woven into the wider fabric of life within the city.

Summary

As one considers the role of emperor worship in the first two centuries C.E., it becomes clear that there were certain political advantages linked with the Roman imperial cult. These advantages served both Rome and the individual provinces and cities. The establishment of provincial and municipal temples created new opportunities for social advancement, and emperor worship was integrated within these wider contexts. Given these benefits and the incorporation of emperor worship within the life of the city, it is unsurprising that Christians could and did face social pressure and eventually persecution from the larger society as a result of abstention

¹³⁷ While not directly related to the imperial cult, a number of inscriptions mark the individual as a φιλοσεβαστος. See *IvEph* 2.236, 237, 449; 7.1.3015; *IGR* 4.1732.

¹³⁸ Turcan, "La promotion du sujet," 55.

from participation in emperor worship.¹³⁹ A firm stance, in this regard, would have limited Christian participation in guilds and other associations¹⁴⁰ as well as in other civic events and would have led, at the very least, to ostracization.

Although the presence of political and social benefits would be enough to explain, to a degree, early Christian objections to emperor worship, further consideration of the rituals and language used indicates that one cannot simply identify the Roman imperial cult as a purely political institution, as was once common during the earlier part of the twentieth century.¹⁴¹ Such a distinction may rather stem from modern interpretation rather than ancient conceptions.¹⁴² We now turn our attention, then, to what may be considered the “religious” nature of the imperial cult.

Religious Features

Few would doubt the political aspects of the Roman imperial cult, but the religious ones are far more contested. Some scholars, particularly during the first part of the twentieth century, have concluded that the Roman imperial cult appeared to be a “religion” but lacked any genuine religious content.¹⁴³ More recently, this

¹³⁹ The question of the persecution of Christians during the reign of Domitian has been debated by scholars in recent years. See Naylor, “Roman Imperial Cult,” 225-227; E. M. Smallwood, “Domitian’s Attitude Towards the Jews and Judaism,” *CP* 51 (1956): 1-13; Donald McFayden, “The Occasion of the Domitianic Persecution,” *AJT* 24.1 (1920): 46-66; Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (trans. Annabel Bedini; London: Croon Helm, 1983), 44; D. L. Jones, “Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult”; K. H. Water, “The Character of Domitian,” *Phoenix* 18 (1964): 49-77; Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge, 1992); L. Thompson, *Revelation*, 95-115; F. Gerald Downing, “Pliny’s Persecutions of Christians: Revelation and 1 Peter,” *JSNT* 34 (1988): 105-123; D. Warden, “Imperial Persecution and the Dating of 1 Peter and Revelation,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 203-212; R. L. P. Milburn, “The Persecution of Domitian,” *CQR* 139 (1945): 154-164; Jacques Moreau, *La persecution du christianisme dans l’Empire romain* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1956), 38.

¹⁴⁰ So Harland, “Honours and Worship”; and id., “Imperial Cults within Local Cultural Life.”

¹⁴¹ See Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 178; L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 237.

¹⁴² See Harland, “Honours and Worship,” 322; see also Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 15. The statement of Jesus in Matt 22:21 has perhaps served to contribute to this distinction. This statement has often been interpreted to place a divide between religion and politics. There is good reason to doubt this interpretation, however. See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 3:217-218; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 3:63-67.

¹⁴³ Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 178; Nock, “Deification and Julian,” 121; Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, 82; Martin P. Nilsson, *A History of the Greek Religion* (trans. F. J. Fielden; Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 288.

assessment has been challenged by scholars such as Price and Friesen.¹⁴⁴ Within this section, I will survey the various features which indicate the “religious” nature of Roman emperor worship. The discussion here will also anticipate the subsequent section, in which I will show evidence of John’s interaction with these features.

Cult Types

In considering the worship of the emperor in the Roman Empire, many scholars have noted that ruler worship was far from a new innovation.¹⁴⁵ For some scholars, the worship of the Roman emperor was merely the appropriation of previous forms, such as those associated with Alexander the Great and his successors, for political purposes.¹⁴⁶ In comparison with previous cults, however, the interest in the Roman imperial cult seems to have been much more widespread and long-lasting.¹⁴⁷ Emperor cults appear in a variety of locations geographically (throughout the Roman Empire) and socially (both public and private). Although precise descriptions of these cults are lacking, certain features may be observed that indicate the nature of the cult forms.

The literary historical sources suggest that the provincial cults were the most prominent form of emperor worship.¹⁴⁸ This emphasis is understandable as these cults were, in many ways, the most public. The first of these cults was established in Asia Minor during the time of Augustus, and both the provincial leadership and the emperor were involved in the process.¹⁴⁹ The provincial leadership apparently took the lead in proposing a cult, and the emperor would give permission to proceed with the building of a temple. A particular city would house the provincial cult, and this

¹⁴⁴ See Price, *Rituals and Power*. See also Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*; and id., *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*; Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*.

¹⁴⁵ See, among others, L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 57; Peter Herz, “Emperors: Caring for the Empire and Their Successors,” in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 306; Bowersock, “Perceptions and Persistence,” 171; Ferguson, *Religions*, 89.

¹⁴⁶ Bowersock, “Perceptions and Persistence,” 172; Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 178.

¹⁴⁷ Millar notes, “...the notion that the cults directed to Emperors evolved from those for Hellenistic kings is hardly even half-truth. There is nothing anywhere to suggest that the *scale* of cult-acts for Hellenistic kings had ever approached that which immediately appeared for Augustus” (*italics his*). See Fergus Millar, “State and Subject: The Impact of Monarchy,” in *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* (ed. Fergus Millar and Erich Segal; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 53; so also Price, *Rituals and Power*, 78.

¹⁴⁸ Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio focus most prominently on this form, although not to the exclusion of other forms.

¹⁴⁹ And, as in the case of the second provincial temple in Asia Minor, the Senate was also involved.

city may have also served as the meeting place for the *koinon*.¹⁵⁰ The imperial temples were featured on coins minted at the time and played a role in competitions between cities.¹⁵¹ In many ways, these provincial cults were the most prominent examples of Roman emperor worship.

The provincial cults were not the only form of emperor worship, however. Municipal cults under the authority of the local city were also common. The municipal cults in particular, as Bowersock has noted, flourished in the east.¹⁵² These municipal cults, unlike the provincial cults, were not under the control of the provincial leadership, and the cities did not need to seek permission from the emperor in order to initiate cultic activity.¹⁵³ In addition to these municipal temples, altars have also been found in public arenas within the city.¹⁵⁴

Finally, some evidence also shows the existence of private cults. Although apparently not as popular, cult for the emperor did play a role in household worship.¹⁵⁵ During the time of Augustus, the practice was established of pouring out a libation to the emperor in the context of a meal in the home.¹⁵⁶ Horace notes the worship of Augustus alongside household gods,¹⁵⁷ and Ovid likewise speaks of the presence of a shrine to Caesar in his home.¹⁵⁸ As Turcan notes, it is very difficult to determine exact private views concerning the Roman emperor, but these instances of household devotion provide some indication.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁰ See Magie, *Roman Rule*, 2:448; Ronald Mellor, "The Goddess Roma," *ANRW* 17.2:977.

¹⁵¹ On the former, see *BMC* 1.548, 705, 706.

¹⁵² G.W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, 116; Price notes the presence of priests of Augustus attested in thirty-four cities in Asia Minor. See *Rituals and Power*, 58.

¹⁵³ See Nock, "Religious Developments," 486; Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1:470. Municipal cults have been found in a number of cities throughout the empire. For municipal cults to Augustus (both alongside Roma and to Augustus alone), see Magie, *Roman Rule*, 2:1614. Price notes the connection between the presence of the imperial cult and the level of organization within the communities. See Price, *Powers and Rituals*, 78-86.

¹⁵⁴ See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 138, 142-146; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 121-137. Gradel notes that in the Roman context the household cults were likely directed toward the living emperor. The types of materials used, in this case, help to explain the lack of remaining evidence (see *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 199-212).

¹⁵⁵ Richard Alston, *Aspects of Roman History, AD 14-117* (London: Routledge, 1998), 310; Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 355.

¹⁵⁶ Dio 51.19.7; see L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 151.

¹⁵⁷ Horace, *Carm.* 4.5.31-36.

¹⁵⁸ Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 4.9.105-108.

¹⁵⁹ Turcan, "La promotion du sujet," 55.

Comparing evidence of various cult forms, it becomes clear that the worship of the Roman emperor during the first two centuries C.E. was a diverse and widespread phenomenon. Cultic acts could take place under the auspices of the larger provincial authority, within the cities, and within the private sphere as well. These various forms, though, shared the common focus upon the Roman emperor.

The Roman Emperor in the Imperial Cult

Within the various forms of the Roman imperial cult, the emperor and members of the imperial family were central recipients of cultic acts. In this section, we will first consider the role played by the Roman emperor himself. Next, we will discuss the honorific titles used with respect to the emperor. Finally, we will explore the types of imagery used to depict the Roman emperor.

The Roman Emperor. Although one could argue that emperor worship could have arisen apart from any actions on the part of the emperor himself, particularly in the Greek east, it becomes clear from the works of Suetonius and Dio that the emperor did play a significant role in the development of the cult forms. From the time of Augustus onward, the impact could be felt most heavily in the provincial imperial cults. As noted previously, it appears that the initiation of the provincial cult in Pergamum came from the province itself.¹⁶⁰ Before construction was allowed to commence on the provincial temple, however, Augustus' permission was sought.¹⁶¹ In response, he gave the restriction that the temple was not to be dedicated to the emperor alone; Roma would be a co-dedicatee.¹⁶² Within the Latin west, as we noted previously, emperor worship developed later than in the east and was shaped by the more active influence of the Roman emperor.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ See Suetonius, *Aug.* 52; Dio 51.20.6-8.

¹⁶¹ See Suetonius, *Aug.* 52.

¹⁶² See Suetonius, *Aug.* 52. Although the initial tendency in the provincial cults during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius was to join the worship of the emperor with other figures, the worship of the family dynasty, a sole deceased emperor, or the current ruling emperor became more common.

¹⁶³ See L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 212; M. P. Charlesworth, "Ruler-Cult," 27-28; Nock, "Religious Developments," 486. Some scholars have noted that there was some evidence of worship prior to the formal establishment of the cult, though (see Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 349, 356; Leonard A. Curchin, "Cult and Celt: Indigenous Participation in Emperor Worship in Central Spain," in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Alastair Small; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 17; Ann Arbor: Thompson-Shore, 1996), 144-145). See Livy, *Summary of Book*, 139; Strabo 4.3.2.

In the subsequent reign of Tiberius, the precedent of Augustus was followed in seeking the emperor's approval for a second provincial temple in Asia Minor.¹⁶⁴ In the west, a request for a provincial temple at Tarraco centered on Augustus was submitted apparently in 15 C.E., also during the reign of Tiberius.¹⁶⁵ Although it seems that the Senate played the chief role in responding to that request, the approach taken corresponds to Tiberius' practice of promoting the worship of *Divus Augustus*.¹⁶⁶ With the request for an additional temple in Baetica, Tiberius politely refused.¹⁶⁷ At the provincial level, then, worship of the emperor appears to have required the consent of the emperor himself. Price has suggested that the reason for the acceptance and/or refusal on the part of the emperor is that this approach maintained the nature of the relationship as one of gift/exchange.¹⁶⁸ This would have prevented the authorization of provincial imperial cults from becoming a mere formality on the part of the emperor or an expectation on the part of the province, but there were certainly other factors involved that may have influenced the decision of the emperor.¹⁶⁹

The emperors also differed in their stance toward receiving worship. Some, like Caligula, were very active in the promotion of worship for themselves.¹⁷⁰ Others, such as Claudius, were reputed to be more moderate.¹⁷¹ As one considers the material culture connected with the Roman imperial cult, it appears that the Roman emperor had varying degrees of influence and control. Some emperors are reported to have played a central role in the commissioning of certain works.¹⁷² As noted

¹⁶⁴ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.15.

¹⁶⁵ Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.78. See Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 1.1:150-151.

¹⁶⁶ See Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1.1:150n3.

¹⁶⁷ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.37; 4.38.1; cf. Dio 57.9.1; 58.8.4. The refusal language is again given in his letter to the Gytheates. See SEG 11.922. Despite the use of this language, Tiberius may have expected deification after death. See Lily Ross Taylor, "Tiberius' Refusals of Divine Honors," *TAPA* 60 (1929): 93-98.

¹⁶⁸ See *Ritual and Sacrifice*, 65-75, esp. 74.

¹⁶⁹ In the case of Tiberius' refusal of an additional temple, Friesen suggests that it may have stemmed more from senatorial disapproval than a desire to follow exactly the precedent of Augustus (see *Twice Neokoros*, 16).

¹⁷⁰ See Dio 59.4.4; 59.28.1-6; Philo, *Legat.* 75, 78-93.

¹⁷¹ On Claudius, see John Ferguson, "Ruler-worship," in vol. 2 of *The Roman World* (ed. John Wachter; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 772; Martin P. Charlesworth, "Deus Noster Caesar," *The Classical Review* 39.5/6 (1925): 113.

¹⁷² Dio 59.28.2-6; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.8; Suetonius, *Cal.* 22; *Dom.* 13.2.

earlier, scholars are divided as to the role that the emperor played in the issuing of Roman coins.¹⁷³ Regardless of whether the emperor played a direct role in determining the language and imagery used in the minting of coins, our evidence shows that preferences on the part of the emperor were respected.¹⁷⁴

In these ways, the emperor could play a direct role in the imperial cult. Because of this role, some have viewed it largely as an institution through which the Roman emperor was able to maintain power and ensure loyalty.¹⁷⁵ While the imperial cult could serve these purposes, the intervention of the reigning emperor was not entirely necessary for its continuation. Certain emperors did take a more active role in self-promotion, but the cult flourished apart from the involvement of the emperor.

As one considers municipal cults and other expressions of the Roman imperial cult, the direct role of the reigning emperor appears to decrease considerably. Within the east, it appears that the focus was directed toward the reigning emperor.¹⁷⁶ There is evidence, however, that the cult forms could also outlast the reign of a particular emperor. In Pergamum a celebration of Augustus continued at least until the second century.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, a cult for Tiberius is attested well past his reign.¹⁷⁸ Even in cases of *damnatio memoriae*, it was possible for cult forms to persist. In the late first century C.E. the provincial cult in Ephesus was established under the reign of Domitian.¹⁷⁹ After his death, his condemnation by the Senate, and the end of the Flavian line, the provincial cult was able to survive in

¹⁷³ See Sutherland, *The Emperor and the Coinage*; Levick, "Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage," 104-116; Sutherland, "Compliment or Complement?" 85-93.

¹⁷⁴ Domitian's preference for the title "Germanicus," for example, is picked up by coins of the day. See BMC 2.45-50A, 70-99, etc. This title appears to have been added in 83 C.E. See Alain Martin, *La titulature épigraphique de Domitien* (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 181; Frankfurt: Althenäum, 1987), 168. He also notes the connection that this title would have made with the Julio-Claudian line (Ibid. 184).

¹⁷⁵ This is particularly argued with respect to the western portions of the empire. See Magie, *Roman Rule*, 1:452; M. P. Charlesworth, "Ruler-Cult," 27-28.

¹⁷⁶ So S. R. F. Price, "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult," *JHS* 104 (1984): 85.

¹⁷⁷ IGR IV 353=*IvPergamon* 374. Price notes that this is likely due to the correlation of the calendar with the birth of Augustus. *Rituals and Power*, 61.

¹⁷⁸ Price notes a priest of Tiberius attested in the third century C.E. in *Rituals and Power*, 61; see IGR 3.474.

¹⁷⁹ Friesen makes a strong case for dating the provincial temple in Ephesus to the time of Domitian. See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 41-49.

Ephesus, albeit with modification. In a number of cases, Domitian's name and titles were simply removed and replaced by Vespasian's.¹⁸⁰ Although the tendency in the east was to focus upon the reigning emperor, such examples indicate the possible longevity of these temples.

Honorific Titles. One of the interesting features of the broader context of the imperial cult is the type of terminology used to refer to the emperor. In the Latin context, it has long been observed that a distinction in terminology was commonly used. For those emperors (and family members) who had died and were afforded deification by the Senate, the term *divus* was applied to the individual's name.¹⁸¹ By 183 C.E., a number of emperors and members of the imperial family had received this title.¹⁸² While the term *divus* was typically applied to the deceased emperor, the term *deus* was generally avoided. Some scholars have emphasized that this distinction highlighted the difference between the human emperors and the gods.¹⁸³ While this may be the case to an extent, other factors played a role. First, the terms *divus* and *deus* may have shared some semantic ground, with the two being apparently interchangeable at times.¹⁸⁴ While *divus* may be more appropriately used of the "once mortal" and *deus* of the "eternal," both terms are used to refer to beings determined to be worthy of cult.¹⁸⁵ Additionally, one of the reasons for the use of *divus* may be related to the process of deification. Simpson concludes, "In sum, it seems that only a formal motion in the Senate could create a *divus*, and that in the

¹⁸⁰ I.e. *IvEph* 2.232, 232A, 233, 235, 237, 238, 239.

¹⁸¹ For Augustus, the emphasis upon being a *divi filius* was part of his public argument in order to establish his position in the empire. See Larry J. Kreitzer, "Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor," *BA* 53.4 (1990): 213.

¹⁸² These include: Octavian, Claudius, Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, Trajan, Marciana, Matidia, Plotina, Sabina, Hadrian, Faustina the Elder, Antonius Pius, Lucius Verus, Faustina the Younger, Marcus Aurelius; see James H. Oliver, "The Divi of the Hadrianic Period," *HTR* 42.1 (1949): 35.

¹⁸³ See G. W. Bowersock, "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult in the Second Century A.D.," in *Le Culte des souverains dans l'Empire romain: sept exposés suivis de discussions* (ed. Willem den Boer; Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 19; Genève: Vandoeuvres, 1972), 198-199.

¹⁸⁴ Mason notes, "The distinction between the two was primarily syntactical; *divus* tended to occur more frequently than *deus* in adjectival functions. Only after the deification of Julius did Latin, with two substantives meaning 'god,' specialize *divus* in the new sense 'deified'" (in Hugh J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: A Lexicon and Analysis* (ASP 13; Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 124; see also L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 69; Price, "Gods and Emperors," 83.

¹⁸⁵ C. J. Simpson, "Caligula's Cult: Immolation, Immortality, Intent," in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Alastair Small; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 17; Ann Arbor: Thompson-Shore, 1996), 68.

minds of the pious, a *divus* differed from a *deus* only in the fact of his creation.”¹⁸⁶ Although a terminological distinction was present, both *divus* and *deus* were part of the official state cult and therefore received worship. Due to the connection with the process of deification (and its association with death), it appears that there was hesitation in using the term *divus* to refer to a living emperor.¹⁸⁷

Though the usage of *divus* predominated, examples exist where the term *deus* is used to refer to the emperor. Scribonius Largus, a physician during the time of Claudius, refers to him as “Our God (*deus*) Caesar.”¹⁸⁸ This particular issue comes to the surface most significantly with the emperor Domitian, as the terms *deus* and *dominus* were utilized. Statius and Martial, for example, employed these terms in their writings.¹⁸⁹ What is debated, however, is the allegation made by Dio and Suetonius that Domitian demanded this language.¹⁹⁰ Some, in recent years, have suggested that ancient portrayals that highlight this demand have presented a negative view of Domitian in order to secure benefits under the new dynasty.¹⁹¹ The language used by Statius and Martial might likewise simply show flattery in hope of procuring the favor of the emperor.¹⁹² Although it is difficult to determine the degree to which Domitian officially sanctioned the use of this terminology, there are enough examples of its use to indicate that it was at least accepted, if not preferred, by Domitian.¹⁹³ Additionally, Scribonius Largus’ reference to Claudius as a *deus*

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 69.

¹⁸⁷ Simpson notes Horace’s use of *praesens*, rather than *divus* in *Carm* 3.5.1-4. See “Caligula’s Cult,” 67. Tacitus records that Nero avoided the application of *divus* to himself while still alive. See Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.74.

¹⁸⁸ M. P. Charlesworth, “Deus Noster Caesar,” 115. See Scribonius Largus, *Compositiones*, Praef; C60; and C163.

¹⁸⁹ Martial 4.67.4; 5.2.6; 5.5.1, 3, 4; 5.8.1; 6.64.14; 7.5; 7.8.2; 7.12.1; 7.34.8; 7.40.2; 7.45.7; 7.99.8; 8.1.1; 8.8.6; 8.31.3; 8.82.1-4; 9.20.2; 9.23.3; 9.24.6; 9.28.7-8; 9.65.2; 9.66.3; 9.101.23-24; but see also 10.72.3; Statius, *Silvae* 1.1.54; 3.4.101; 4 pref; 5.1.94; 1.1.62; 1.6.46-48, 81-84; 3.3.103, 110; 3.4.19-20; 4.2.6; 4.3.128-129; 5.1.42, 74, 112, 261; 5.2.170.

¹⁹⁰ Dio 67.4.7; Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.1-2.

¹⁹¹ See L. Thompson, *Revelation*, 112. As Thompson and others alledge, negative portrayals of Domitian as an egomaniac would also have served to praise the virtues of the subsequent emperors. These later dismissals of Domitian’s reign would have illustrated one’s allegiance and approval of the reigning emperor.

¹⁹² Thompson, *Revelation*, 106; and id., “Domitianus Dominus: A Gloss on Statius *Silvae* 1.6.84,” *AJP* 105.4 (1984): 472-473.

¹⁹³ In addition to the sources mentioned above, see also Quintilian, *Inst.* 4 prooemium 5; Dio Chrysostom, *Def.* 1: ἀλλὰ τὸν ἰσχυρότατον καὶ βαρύτατον καὶ δεσπότην ὀνομαζόμενον καὶ

indicates that the use of the terminology during the reign of Domitian, though much more pervasive, was not revolutionary. After one moves past the reign of Domitian, there appears to be a return to more conservative language during the reigns of Nerva and Trajan.¹⁹⁴

In the context of the Greek east, several terms are significant for consideration. First, from the time of Augustus, the term Σεβαστός was frequently used as a term of honor to refer to the emperor.¹⁹⁵ Like “Augustus” in the west, Σεβαστός carried elements of divine honor with it.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, though apparently not as pervasive, the emperor was called κυρίως.¹⁹⁷ The name of the emperor could also be combined with the name of a deity, such as the case of Hadrian with Zeus Olympius,¹⁹⁸ and the emperor could be termed a σωτήρ¹⁹⁹ or a κτίστης.²⁰⁰ Perhaps more significantly yet, the term θεός was frequently used to refer to the emperor.²⁰¹ One difficulty that arises, in this regard, is that θεός could be used to render both *divus* and *deus* into Greek.²⁰² Bowersock suggests that the distinction between god and man was understood by “cultivated” Greeks, even if it was not reflected in the terminology used.²⁰³

θεὸν παρὰ πᾶσιν Ἑλλήσι καὶ βαρβάροις, τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς ὄντα δαίμονα πονηρόν. Cf. also Ruurd R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons: Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 382-383.

¹⁹⁴ Pliny, however, continues to use *dominus* when addressing Trajan. See *Ep.* 10.2.1, 3a.1, 5.1, 6.1, 8.1.

¹⁹⁵ See *IvEph* 1a.18d, 22; 2.213, 232-242, 265, 267, 269, 271, etc.

¹⁹⁶ See Fears, “Ruler Cult,” 1020; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 2n1; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ See *IGR* 4.1666; *IvEph* 2.412; 514B; 7.1.3245; *Syll*³ No. 814; cf. also Meyer, *Ostraka der Sammlung Deissmann*, nos 36a, 39, 40, 47, 59, 77, 86, 87; Kenneth Scott, *The Imperial Cult under the Flavians* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936), 20-21. This particular designation will be considered further in chapter four with respect to the usage in Revelation.

¹⁹⁸ *IvEph* 2.267-271, 430; *IGR* 4.986; for further examples, see Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 86.

¹⁹⁹ *IvEph* 2. 251, 272; 7.1.3410; *IGR* 3.719; 4.305, 353, 383, 986; *OGIS* 2.668; Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 2, 760.

²⁰⁰ *IvEph* 2.252, 272; 7.1.3410 (of Hadrian); *IGR* 4.353, 986.

²⁰¹ See, for example, *IBM* 522, 892; *IGR* 3.719; 933; 4.201, 353, 1608c; *IvEph* 1a.18d; 2.232-233, 235, 237-238, 241-242, 266; 274; *IvEph* 2.404=SEG XXVI 1269; *IvEph* 2.428; 3.742; 4.1393; 5.1506. The emperor could also be said to be θεός ἐπιφανής. See *IGR* 3.328; *IvEph* 2.251; Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 2, 760.

²⁰² For *divus*, see *IvEph* 2.404. The “joke” of Vespasian, as recorded by Dio and Suetonius, may be an example of θεός for *deus* (assuming that these refer to the same statement by Vespasian). Suetonius: “Vae,” inquit, “puto deus dio.” (*Vesp.* 23.4); Dio: θεός ἡδη γίνομαι (66.17.3).

²⁰³ See Bowersock, “Perceptions and Persistence,” 172; and id., “Greek Intellectuals,” 198-199.

In some cases, the use of θεός may indeed be an attempt simply to translate *divus* into Greek, as in the case of *divi filius*²⁰⁴ or in the translation of *divus* when used to refer to a deceased emperor.²⁰⁵ A question arises, however, when one considers the application of θεός to the reigning emperor. Whereas the practice in Rome was to avoid the use of *divus* to refer to a living emperor, no such distinction existed in the use of θεός in the east.²⁰⁶ Although it appears that those in the east may have been aware of such distinctions in Rome, there are still examples that violate the “normal” usage.²⁰⁷ As Price notes, it was not possible to refer to a living emperor as *divi filius divus*. Θεοῦ υἱὸς θεός was possible, however.²⁰⁸

One of the obstacles of assessing the terminology may be the Christian influence present in the history of western scholarship. The term “god,” in its typical English usage, serves to refer to a being understood as ontologically divine. As a result, the use of θεός to refer to the Roman emperor, where it is clearly not a translation of *divus*, appears to be an exception to normal conceptions of deity, as the emperor was clearly a man. For some scholars, then, this represents a “metaphorical” or “loose” employment of the term θεός.²⁰⁹

In his article, “Gods and Emperors,” Price has suggested that θεός should be understood as a different sort of predicate than *divus* or the English “god.”²¹⁰ Rather

²⁰⁴ See *IvEph* 2.404; J. R. Rea, “Lease of a Red Cow Called Thayris,” *JEA* 68 (1982): 278.

²⁰⁵ See, for example, *IBM* 522, which features both Latin and Greek. The Latin reads: Imp(erator) Caesar, divi f(ilius), Aug(ustus); the Greek: Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ υἱὸς Σεβαστὸς. Regarding similar usage of θεός in Magnesia, Thieme notes, “Wenn man bei der Lektüre griechischer Inschriften zum ersten Male auf dieses θεός stößt, halt man unwillkürlich einen Augenblick inne, bis man sich erinnert, daß es nur die Wiedergabe des lateinischen *divus*, nicht die Übersetzung von *deus* ist” (Gottfried Thieme, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander und das Neue Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 28). See also Ulrich Wilcken, “Octavian after the Fall of Alexandria,” *JRS* 27 (1937): 138.

²⁰⁶ See *IGR* 3.286. Here, θεός is applied not only to the living emperor but also to his deceased father and his deceased grandfather.

²⁰⁷ For an example of the former, see *IGR* 3.83. Price notes the care employed by the emperor in distinguishing between the deified and non-deified members. See “Gods and Emperors,” 84.

²⁰⁸ Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 84; see *IGR* 3.933; 4.201, 311.

²⁰⁹ See M. P. Charlesworth, “Ruler-Cult,” 13. He notes examples from Cicero (*De or.* 1,106) and Philo (*Mos.*, 1,158) that appear to break the “normal” usage of θεός.

²¹⁰ Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 79-95. He notes the number of examples where the use of the term does not adequately translate the Latin *divus*. In assessing the use of θεός, Price distinguishes three different classes of predicate: a formal human ascription (i.e. “he is a ‘knight’”), a proclamation based on investigation (“he is a ‘saint’”), and an assessment “about the world not based on human fiat” (“he is a ‘person’”) (see pp. 79-80). Typically, the term θεός is interpreted as a predicate falling within one of the first two classes. When interpreted in this manner, the use of θεός seems quite “random” (80-

than being based on ontological questions or formal decree, the use of the language can be seen as an appropriate response to the power of the emperor. The use of this language, although not based upon a formal decision as in the west, nevertheless does associate the emperor with the religious sphere. One maxim cited by Price puts it quite succinctly: τῷ θεῷ; τῷ κρατοῦντι βασιλεύς; ἰσθῆτος.²¹¹

As it relates to the question of the relationship between the emperor and the traditional gods, then, the use of θεός should not serve as the sole indicator.²¹² The emperor, in the Greek east, could easily be termed a θεός, just as the traditional deities could. To shed greater light on the subject we must turn to the nature of emperor worship as conveyed by the imagery and ritual acts associated with the cult.

Imagery of the Emperor. Within the Roman imperial cult, the emperor could be depicted in a number of ways. In terms of the surviving material culture, the emperor is depicted in busts, full statues, reliefs on altars, coins, and verbal descriptions. The presence of the emperor was thereby manifested.²¹³ More than simply visual representations of his appearance, these portrayals helped propagate certain concepts and themes associated with the emperor.

First, the emperor was depicted as an example of piety in his upholding of the traditional structures of Roman religion. In some sources, the emperor is depicted as a priest offering sacrifice.²¹⁴ Within Rome in particular, the priesthoods figured

82). As Price argues, θεός should rather be understood as falling within the third category. Θεός could quite appropriately, in this way, be applied to both traditional deity and to the emperor.

²¹¹ Fr. Bilabel, "Fragmente aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung," *Phil* 80 (1925): 339; cited by Price, "Gods and Emperors," 95. Gradel takes a similar approach to that of Price. He suggests that the divide between men and gods reflects a distinction in "status" rather than a distinction of "species." See Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 26.

²¹² This is not to say, however, that the Christian use of θεός is without significance. Although Christians could use the term to refer to other beings, the term was regularly used to refer to the divine being to whom alone worship is due (see, for example, 1 Cor 8:5-6).

²¹³ Even if an emperor had not visited a particular province, coins and statues would have provided opportunity for the people to be familiar with the image of the emperor. It appears that in the production of the imagery of the emperor Rome played some role in controlling the portrait, as remaining portraiture can be broadly categorized; see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 172-174; Zanker, *The Power of Images*, 301.

²¹⁴ See, for example *IvEph* 2.415; 6.2037; 7.2.3801 II; cf. *BMC* 3.776. For examples from the reign of Trajan, see Inez Scott Ryberg, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (MAAR 22; Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1955), 154-156; see also plate LV, fig. 83 and plate LVI, fig. 85. For a discussion of the emperor as sacrificial, see Robert Gordon, "The Veil of Power: Emperors, Sacrificers and Benefactors," in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; London: Duckworth, 1990), 202-219.

prominently in the structure of Roman religious practice.²¹⁵ After 180 B.C.E., no member of the Senate was permitted to hold more than one office at a time.²¹⁶ Julius Caesar played an important role in redefining the relationship with the priestly courses, however, as he added additional roles to that of *pontifex maximus*.²¹⁷ Augustus likewise became *pontifex maximus* and was a member of all the major priestly colleges.²¹⁸ Mary Beard notes, “For the first time priestly knowledge had been brought together with executive power; and the emperor, as focus of political authority, became also a focus of priestly authority – with a hierarchy of major and minor priests radiating outwards from his center.”²¹⁹ This imagery was also carried into the Greek east, with the emperor described as a “great high priest.”²²⁰ As such, the Roman emperor set an example for the people and was portrayed as carrying on the “sacred tradition.”²²¹ The image of the emperor as priest helps to indicate the religious connotations associated with an office often viewed in scholarship as chiefly political.

Secondly, the emperor was often portrayed as a warrior, victorious in battle. For imperial ideology, this was particularly important. Victories in battle were commemorated and celebrated,²²² and honorific titles were bestowed.²²³ As Price notes, “The military aspects of the empire had been crucially important from the

²¹⁵ See Robert Gordon, “From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion, and Ideology,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; London: Duckworth, 1990), 179-180.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 182.

²¹⁷ Dio 42.51.4.

²¹⁸ *Res. Gest.* 10; Beard, “Priesthood in the Roman Republic,” 48.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 48.

²²⁰ *IvEph* 2.266: Ἀδριανὸν Σεβαστόν, ἀρχιερεῖ μέγιστον. See also *IGR* 4.1156.

²²¹ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 20. The association of sacrifice with the rule of the emperor can be seen in the imagery of the Ara Pacis Augustae. Elsner notes, “In effect we cannot clearly separate the significance of the Ara Pacis from the broader context of the Horologium and the whole Campus Martius complex (including the broader Mausoleum and Ustrinum of Augustus), built between 42 and 9 B.C. This entire programme, which cannot be dissociated (certainly after Augustus’ death) from the Emperor’s apotheosis, is a visual enactment of the interpretation of Augustan religion with imperial politics. The Ara Pacis, a prime site of sacrificial cult, always bore the visual and symbolic reminder that its sacrifice had a socio-political orientation.” See John Elsner, “Cult and Sculpture: Sacrifice in the Ara Pacis Augustae,” *JRS* 81 (1991): 52-53.

²²² The arch of Titus is one well-known example.

²²³ Domitian, for example, used the title “Germanicus” in commemoration of his victories in Germany. See *IvEph* 2.232-235, 237-239, 241-242. The title appears to have been removed from each of these inscriptions as part of the larger erasure of references to Domitian.

beginning. Augustus had brought peace to the world by means of the sword. His successors tried to maintain their position in part by means of the prestige of victory, whether justified or not.”²²⁴ Even prior to Augustus, the statue of Julius Caesar in the temple of Quirinius featured the inscription: “To the Unconquered God.”²²⁵ Conversely, some emperors were criticized concerning the acceptance of military titles and acclamations without the appropriate battle experience.²²⁶ Association with the gods was also communicated by military imagery. Nero, in response to the end of hostilities with the Parthians, was given a statue in the temple of Mars,²²⁷ and Domitian apparently wore a breastplate fashioned after that of Minerva.²²⁸

Finally, the emperor could be portrayed using the imagery of the traditional gods. This could include both symbols as well as the type of sculpture.²²⁹ In some cases, this involved the appropriation of statues of traditional gods, which were then refashioned with the head of the emperor.²³⁰ In other cases, statues could be fashioned in such a way as to depict the emperor as one of the traditional deities.²³¹ Statues of the emperors were also placed alongside those of the traditional gods.²³² In these cases, it appears that the placing of the image alongside that of the traditional deity served the purpose of communicating an association with the god(s), either as a representative/descendent or as possessing traits associated with the god(s). Suetonius notes, for example, the collocation of the images of Domitian, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva on the crowns of priests at a competition between

²²⁴ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 182-183.

²²⁵ Dio 43.45.3; Statius uses similar language of Domitian in *Silvae* 4.7.49-50 and 4.8.61 as does Martial in 7.6.8. K. Scott notes that there may be evidence for the use of the title with respect to Vespasian (see *Imperial Cult*, 22).

²²⁶ See Dio 59.22.2.

²²⁷ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.8.

²²⁸ See Martial 7.1.

²²⁹ Price notes the presence of both busts and naked statues of the emperors in Asia Minor; see *Rituals and Power*, 181-185. In both cases, the traditional gods could also be depicted in like fashion.

²³⁰ Caligula is noted in this regard, as he had a statue of Zeus refashioned in his likeness. See Dio 59.28.2-6; Suetonius, *Cal.* 22. This could also be expressed in the fashioning of a statue of one of the gods in the likeness of the emperor. L. R. Taylor notes the example of a statue of Apollo with the features of Augustus (see *Divinity*, 154).

²³¹ von Hesberg discusses the statue of Claudius as Jupiter and the contrast with the cultic worship of the emperor's *Genius* (see Henner von Hesberg, “Denkmäler zum Römischen Kaiserkult,” *ANRW* 16.2:935).

²³² See Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.8; 14.12.

priests.²³³ In some cases, an emperor would encourage this association by dressing in the garb of the gods himself.²³⁴ In each of these examples where the emperor is depicted using the imagery of the traditional gods, religious evocations are present.²³⁵

Cultic Acts and the Roman Imperial Cult

One of the major points of discussion in the past century regarding the Roman imperial cult has been the perception in the first two centuries of the divinity of the emperor. If the question is addressed with respect to the terminology used, it is clear that the emperor was called, at various times, both a *deus* and a θεός. As already shown, however, the use of these terms is not conclusive regarding the nature of emperor worship. Recently, scholars have directed closer attention to the cultic acts related to the Roman imperial cult as a means to assess more accurately its religious nature.²³⁶ Although full descriptions of regular procedures associated with the various cults do not exist, sufficient evidence remains that enables an assessment of the types of cultic acts associated with emperor worship. We will turn our attention first in this section, then, to the particular cultic acts directed toward the emperor. Thereafter, the relationship of the emperor to the traditional deities as indicated by these cultic acts will be explored.

Types of Cult Offered. Regarding the type of cult offered, relevant evidence is provided by a number of sources.²³⁷ It is important to note, first of all, that sacrifices and ritual acts could be offered to individuals in order to honor them for acts done to benefit the city.²³⁸ As one considers the Roman imperial cult, however, the evidence suggests that emperor worship, in its associated rituals, moves beyond these other cult forms. Cultic acts directed toward the emperor were typically fashioned according to the pattern of the cult offered to the traditional gods. Price notes, “It was possible to differentiate between heroic and divine sacrifices

²³³ See *Dom.* 4.4.

²³⁴ See Philo, *Legat.* 78-93; Suetonius, *Cal.* 52.

²³⁵ So Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 1.1:30-31.

²³⁶ See Price, “Between Man and God,” 28-43 and *Rituals and Power*, 7-11, 133-248; Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 59-75, 142-168; Pleket, “Imperial Mysteries,” 331-347; Simpson, “Caligula’s Cult,” 63-71; Harland, “Imperial Cults,” 85-107, esp. 103-107.

²³⁷ For a succinct discussion of the types of sacrifices, see Price, “Between Man and God,” 29-30.

²³⁸ See Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 1.1:4-5.

(*enhagismata* and *thysiai*), and it is of great importance that heroic sacrifices were never specified as the appropriate form of cult for Hellenistic kings or Roman emperors.”²³⁹ Nicolaus of Damascus, a contemporary of Augustus, notes: ὅτι εἰς τιμῆς ἀξίωσιν τοῦτον οὕτω προσεῖπον οἱ ἄνθρωποι ναοῖς τε καὶ θυσίαις γεραίρουσιν, ἀνά τε νήσους καὶ ἡπείρους διηρημένοι καὶ κατὰ πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη τό τε μέγεθος αὐτοῦ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τὴν εἰς σφᾶς εὐεργεσίαν ἀμειβόμενοι.²⁴⁰ The widespread offering of sacrifices continued to be observed, as an inscription from Smyrna indicates.²⁴¹ Despite this, precise descriptions of cultic acts are not plentiful, but sufficient evidence can be gathered to formulate a broad picture of the types of cultic acts involved.

First of all, hymns were chanted in honor of the emperor.²⁴² Associations of hymn-singers were formed for public performances, perhaps in connection with imperial festivals.²⁴³ Dio likewise notes the proposal of including Augustus’ name along with the traditional gods.²⁴⁴ The chanting of hymns for the emperor reflects an act associated with the traditional deities.²⁴⁵

Secondly, blood sacrifices were also incorporated, perhaps from the time of Caligula, even in the imperial worship in Rome.²⁴⁶ Suetonius and Dio note the

²³⁹ Price, “Between Man and God,” 30. Dio, however, notes the practice of both offering “divine honors” (ἰσοῦσθαι τιμὰν) to emperors who ruled well after their death as well as the building of shrines (ἡρώα) to honor them (see 51.20.6-8). Likewise, it is important to note that it was possible for those considered to be a “hero” to be worshipped as a “god.” See Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 1.1:4. As it relates to the Roman emperor and his family, honors appropriate for the gods were directed to the emperor. “Heroic” honors were appropriate for lesser family members. See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 33.

²⁴⁰ “Because men salute him in this way (as “Augustus”) in view of his claim to honor, they revere him with temples and sacrifices over all the islands and mainlands, and in cities and tribes repaying the greatness of his virtue and benefactions towards them.” Nicolaus of Damascus, *Life of Augustus*, 3; also cited by Price, “Between Man and God,” 28; see also *IGR* 4.39.

²⁴¹ See *IGR* 4.1398.

²⁴² See *IvEph* 1a.18d; 3.742, 921; 7.2.3801; *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374. *IvSmyrna* 2,1.594. It appears that although a primary association of hymn-singers existed at Pergamum there were hymn-singers in other cities that were also to participate in certain celebrations. See Harland, “Imperial Cults,” 94-95.

²⁴³ See *IvEph* 1a18d; 7.2.3801; *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374.

²⁴⁴ Dio 51.20.1.

²⁴⁵ For a discussion of hymn-singers associated with other cults, see Martin P. Nilsson, “Pagan Divine Service in Late Antiquity,” *HTR* 38.1 (1945): 66-67.

²⁴⁶ See Simpson, “Caligula’s Cult,” 63; Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 2.1:505-512; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 15-26.

public offering of birds in Rome.²⁴⁷ Fishwick draws attention to the information recorded in the Acts of the Arval Brethren, which testifies to the presence of animal sacrifices to the emperor's *genius* and to the *divi*.²⁴⁸ Simpson notes, "As for sacrifices, it seems that the only extant sculptural depictions of blood sacrifices in the imperial age in Italy in which the emperor was not the sacrificant represent other officials directly related to the cult of the emperor, the *vicomagistri* and the *Viviri Augustales*."²⁴⁹

In addition to blood sacrifices, incense was offered to the image of the emperor.²⁵⁰ These offerings of incense are particularly significant for their later connection with Christian persecution.²⁵¹ Offerings of wine and cakes are also attested in both private and public contexts.²⁵²

Finally, there is evidence, as argued by Pleket, that some ritual acts were modeled after the mystery cults.²⁵³ He notes a number of parallels particularly with the Eleusinian mysteries. Of primary interest is a text from Pergamum.²⁵⁴ Several acts in this text are associated with the worship of the emperor. Wreaths were given to the hymn-singers in the monthly celebration of the birthday of Augustus (and the other emperors)²⁵⁵ and during the celebration of the mysteries.²⁵⁶ To the *Sebastoi*, a cake, incense, and lamps were offered.²⁵⁷ These lamps may have related directly to the use of the image of the emperor in these imperial mysteries,²⁵⁸ as the lamps likely

²⁴⁷ See Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.3; Dio 59.28.6.

²⁴⁸ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 2.1:505-509.

²⁴⁹ Simpson, "Caligula's Cult," 63.

²⁵⁰ See Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 96; *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374.

²⁵¹ See Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 96.

²⁵² On the former, libations for the emperor's *genius* were established at the time of Augustus. See Dio 51.19.7. On the latter, Pliny the Younger notes the offering of wine before the image of the emperor. See Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 96; cf. also *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374.

²⁵³ See Pleket, "Imperial Mysteries," 331-347; see also L. Robert, "Recherches épigraphiques," *Revue des études anciennes* 62 (1960): 321-322; repr. in volume 4 of *Opera Minora Selecta* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969).

²⁵⁴ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374. Pleket also notes references in *SIG*³ 820 and *IBM* 3.600. See Pleket, "Imperial Mysteries," 337.

²⁵⁵ *IGR* 4.353 (B): στεφάνους τοῖς ὑμνωδοῖς.

²⁵⁶ *IGR* 4.353 (B): καὶ τοῖς μυστηρίοις στεφάνωσιν.

²⁵⁷ *IGR* 4.353 (B): καὶ πόπανον καὶ λίβανον καὶ λύχνους τῷ Σεβαστῷ.

²⁵⁸ Although this act is not expressed in the context in *IGR* 4.353 (B), the images (εἰκόνας) of the *Sebastoi* are referred to in *IGR* 4.353 (C), line 12.

functioned to illuminate the image at a key moment during the celebration of the mysteries.²⁵⁹ The “Sebastophant” mentioned in several inscriptions may have had the responsibility of unveiling the image at the appropriate time.²⁶⁰ It is difficult to assess how widespread this practice was, but it appears that certain elements of the mystery cults were indeed adopted and practiced in some forms of emperor worship.

As a whole, these sacrifices situate the Roman emperor within the larger religious landscape in the Greek east. Although these types of rituals place the emperor among the gods rather than among the heroes, there is still debate as to the relationship of the emperor to the traditional gods.

The Emperor and the Gods. As we saw in the previous section, the cultic acts associated with emperor worship were patterned after those directed toward the traditional gods. As one examines the recipient(s) of the cultic acts associated with the Roman imperial cult, several features emerge. First, ritual acts were directed to the traditional deities for the sake of the emperor.²⁶¹ It appears that the purpose of these acts was the continued blessing of the god(s) upon the emperor and thus the continuation of the benefits of his reign. Secondly, ritual acts were directed toward the emperor alongside the traditional gods.²⁶² Finally, there are examples of sacrifice directed solely toward the emperor.²⁶³ The presence of these three types of cultic acts has resulted in a fair amount of discussion amongst scholars. Some have argued that the presence of sacrifices for the emperor indicates a recognition that the

²⁵⁹ So Pleket, “Imperial Mysteries,” 343-344. Kornemann argues that “...während Lampen zur Beleuchtung des Kultbildes des Augustus aufgestellt waren.” See Ernst Kornemann, “Zur Geschichte der antiken Herrscherkulte,” *Klio: Beiträge zur alten Geschichte* 1 (1901): 100. It appears, in light of the usage of lamps elsewhere, that the lamps functioned as an element within the cultic ritual as opposed to merely providing light for the room where the ritual took place. Pleket’s association of the lamps with the image of the emperor, then, appears to be warranted. See also Nilsson, “Pagan Divine Service,” 65.

²⁶⁰ Pleket, “Imperial Mysteries,” 345.

²⁶¹ Philo, *Legat.* 357; *SEG* 11.923; *IGR* 4.1756.

²⁶² See *IvEph* 2.213 (alongside Demeter); 3.719 (alongside Asklepios); *IGR* 4.18 (alongside τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν πάντων); *IGR* 4.39 (alongside Zeus); *IGR* 4.318 (alongside Hermes and Hercules). *IGR* 3.137 records an oath sworn to Augustus alongside Zeus, Earth, Sun, and all the other gods and goddesses. The goddess Roma, in some ways provides a similar, though separate category. See *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamon* 374.

²⁶³ See *IBM* 892, 28-32; *SEG* 28.1227 (cult for Livia and the family of the *Sebastoi*); *IGR* 4.39. In the last case, the honors granted in Mytilene to Augustus were modeled upon the worship given to Zeus. Sacrifices were directed to both, but sacrifices modeled after those to Zeus were to be offered on the birthday of Augustus. See also Price, *Rituals and Power*, 216-220.

emperor was clearly not among the gods.²⁶⁴ The sacrifices directed to the traditional gods would then be normative; a sacrifice directed either toward the emperor alongside the gods or to the emperor alone would be an aberration. There are, however, a number of examples of these latter two categories, and, as a result, these assessments fail to explain all the evidence sufficiently.

Recent interpretations of the imperial cult have attempted to assess the full range of evidence more carefully. Price takes a more moderate view in this regard, suggesting that the two-fold nature of the sacrifices *to* and *for* the emperor place him in an intermediate position between the gods and the rest of humanity.²⁶⁵ Accordingly he proposes that the cases where the recipient is not expressed confirm the place of the emperor between men and the traditional gods.²⁶⁶

Other scholars have challenged this view in recent years by questioning whether these nuances would have been understood in light of the rituals involved. Friesen has argued that the question of divinity was not addressed by these sacrifices. In his estimation, the sacrifices were appropriate expressions of relationships. The people could reasonably sacrifice *to* the emperor because of the way that he functioned with respect to the people. The people could also sacrifice *for* the emperor because “the emperors were not independent of the gods.”²⁶⁷ Harland argues along similar lines as he cites evidence that fails to uphold the distinction between sacrifices *to* and sacrifices *for*.²⁶⁸ In a number of these contexts, he argues, there is no difference expressed between the emperor and the traditional gods.²⁶⁹ Although a clear structure of sacrifices *to* the traditional gods *for* the Roman emperor would have provided a more simple model, the evidence indicates that this was not the case. In evaluating the larger picture that emerges in the Greek east, it appears,

²⁶⁴ See F. E. Adcock, *Roman Political Ideas and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1959), 87.

²⁶⁵ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 233, and “Sacrifice,” 33, 42.

²⁶⁶ See “Sacrifice,” 42; Price, especially in his *Rituals and Power*, argues against the view that the imperial cult was not a “religion” and that the rituals associated with the cult situate it within the larger religious context. The type of sacrifices offered, in his estimation, nevertheless portray some distinction between the traditional gods and the emperors.

²⁶⁷ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 149-150.

²⁶⁸ As already noted, texts such as *IvEph* 2.213; 3.719; and *IGR* 4.18 place the emperor alongside gods with no distinction made.

²⁶⁹ Harland, “Imperial Cults,” 97-98. On this point, Friesen likewise notes, “In fact, the vast majority of the evidence does not distinguish gods from emperors” (see *Twice Neokoros*, 149).

however, that both sacrifices *to* and *for* the emperor were acceptable. J. Rufus Fears concludes that the “cult and ritual give no indication that the figure so worshipped was regarded as in any way distinct from what a modern commentator might deign to consider ‘real gods.’”²⁷⁰

Within Rome, the situation differed, as sacrifices directly *to* the reigning emperor, generally speaking, were largely discouraged within the official state cult. Following the decision of the Senate, the deified emperor was enrolled in the state cult and could then appropriately receive worship.²⁷¹ In some cases, sacrifice to the *numen* of the emperor could closely approximate direct worship without offending prevailing sentiments,²⁷² and Gradel has demonstrated that outside of the official state cult the ruling emperor was the focus of household and private cults.²⁷³

Looking at the religious context more broadly, some scholars have argued that the rise of the Roman imperial cult should be understood as reflecting a declining interest in the traditional Greco-Roman cults.²⁷⁴ Interest in the traditional gods in the Greek east climaxed during the golden age of Greece and waned over the course of the following centuries. With the rise of Alexander the Great and the interaction with the Persian east, the tendency to attribute divinity to human beings increased. For Momigliano, this question of the willingness to call men “gods” directly relates to the question of emperor worship.²⁷⁵ In his estimation, from the 5th century B.C.E. onward, there was a blurring of the boundaries between “god” and “man.”²⁷⁶ This “blurring” reflected a “lack of faith” in the traditional gods and continued through the time of the Roman Empire.²⁷⁷ As a result, attention was directed toward other cults. Athenaeus expresses such a view with respect to the cult

²⁷⁰ See “Ruler Cult,” 1011.

²⁷¹ Suetonius, *Jul.* 58; M. P. Charlesworth, “Refusal,” 1; Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 84.

²⁷² Fears notes that in the worship of the *numen Augusti* “the first princeps came as close as any Roman emperor ever did to direct worship of himself in the state cult” (“Ruler Cult,” 1016).

²⁷³ See *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 199-233.

²⁷⁴ Nilsson is often cited in this regard: “The origin of the cult of men in Greece is to be sought in the convulsions of the dying religion.” See Nilsson, *A History of the Greek Religion*, 288; also L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 54; Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, 95.

²⁷⁵ Momigliano, *On Pagans*, 95.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 97.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 95-97.

of Demeter.²⁷⁸ He records a hymn that notes the contrast between Demeter, who is present and real, and the other gods, who are absent.²⁷⁹ This disillusionment, it has been argued, provided fertile ground for the development of emperor worship.

Others have argued against this characterization.²⁸⁰ Several considerations have been advanced. First, the traditional cults did receive renewed concern from the Roman emperor himself. Augustus is portrayed, despite his importance in the development of emperor worship, as leading a renewal of the worship of the traditional gods.²⁸¹ Price notes that twenty-seven temples for the traditional gods were built, at least in part, under the empire.²⁸² It appears that Vespasian also, as founder of a new dynasty, attempted to follow the example of Augustus in the rebuilding of temples.²⁸³ Secondly, the worship of the emperor appears to have been incorporated into the traditional structures within the city.²⁸⁴ The imagery of the imperial cult, although at times depicting the emperor in the garb of one of the traditional gods, does also often show the emperor alongside the traditional deities.²⁸⁵ In cases where the emperor's image was placed within the temples of the traditional gods, proper respect was shown to the deity to whom the temple was dedicated by placing the image in a location which would not displace the traditional deity. Likewise, in the building of provincial imperial temples, the precedent appears to have been to build a new structure rather than convert a temple which was previously dedicated to a traditional god.²⁸⁶ Finally, the "blurring" of the lines between man

²⁷⁸ Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 6.253; so cited by Fears, "Ruler Cult," 1019.

²⁷⁹ ἄλλοι μὲν ἢ μακρὰν γὰρ ἀπέχουσιν θεοί, ἢ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὦτα, ἢ οὐκ εἴσιν, ἢ οὐ προσέχουσιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ ἓν, σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὀρώμεν, οὐ ξύλινον οὐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀληθινόν. εὐχόμεσθα δὴ σοι.

²⁸⁰ See Price, *Rituals and Power*, 39, 164-165, 233; Price, "Between Man and God," 42; Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 360.

²⁸¹ See L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 45, 159; Nock, *Essays*, 1:21-22; see Augustus, *Res Ges.* 19-20; Horace, *Carm.* 3.6.1-6.

²⁸² Price, *Rituals and Power*, 164-165.

²⁸³ See K. Scott, *Imperial Cult*, 32.

²⁸⁴ See esp. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*; also Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 360.

²⁸⁵ See *BMC* 1.86, 90 (Augustus on obverse; Mars on reverse); 95 (Apollo on reverse); 463 (Diana on reverse); 599 (Venus on reverse).

²⁸⁶ A few exceptions to this in the first century have been noted. One appears to be Caligula, who, according to Dio (59.28.1), desired to convert the temple to Apollo in Miletus into a temple of the imperial cult. Friesen has suggested, however, that Dio may be incorrect on the detail (see *Twice Neokoros*, 24-25). If Caligula desired to appropriate the temple of Apollo, this would not be out of line with what is known about his character from other sources. It would most likely, then, signal his personal approach rather than a change in regular practice or policy. Price also notes a reference made by Pausanias to a few temples in mainland Greece converted into the worship of the emperors. These

and god from the 5th century B.C.E. onward, as alleged by Momigliano and others, may stem, rather, from a misunderstanding of the use of θεός, as noted earlier.

Although some evidence of a decline in the interest in the traditional deities may exist, the worship of the Roman emperor should not be seen as supplanting the longstanding cults of the traditional gods. The imagery and structure of the Roman imperial cult was drawn from the cults of the traditional gods. Likewise, proper concern and respect was shown to the traditional deities by maintaining their places of worship. The Roman imperial cult should not, then, be seen merely as replacing or corrupting the traditional cults; rather, emperor worship functioned within the larger religious structures of the day.

Conclusions

When considered in conjunction with the language used of the Roman emperor, an investigation of the cultic acts helps to clarify the position of the Roman emperor in the imperial cult. The evidence presents a diverse picture in many ways. Particular cultic acts could differ from location to location and throughout time. Sacrifices could be offered *for* the emperor or *to* the emperor, both to the emperor alone and alongside other deities. Despite the diversity, certain characteristics emerge as part of the overall religious context. The cultic acts directed toward the emperor were modeled on those given to the gods. Likewise the cultic acts could take place alongside the traditional cults and not in replacement of these traditional forms. The sources, then, demonstrate the incorporation of the worship of the Roman emperor within the larger religious patterns of the day.

Summary and Conclusions

The Roman imperial cult, as is indicated from the remaining evidence, played an important role in the first two centuries of the Roman Empire, particularly in the context of Asia Minor. The worship of the emperor was a significant feature that was integrated into the overall life of the city and the province. More than simply an institution for the social elite, the Roman imperial cult influenced civic life for a

instances, however, are relatively rare, and it appears that the normal procedure was to construct new buildings or integrate cultic honors within the existing civic or temple structures. See Price, *Rituals and Powers*, 164-165.

broad spectrum of the population.²⁸⁷ Alföldy is likely close to the truth in noting that the Roman imperial cult was the “most important cult of the Roman Empire before the triumph of Christianity.”²⁸⁸

Although the Roman imperial cult resulted in political benefits for both Rome and the provinces, genuine religious elements may be observed. Price’s work serves as a major advance in this way. His reevaluation of methodology has had a significant impact in subsequent studies.²⁸⁹ Likewise, his emphasis on sacrifice and ritual is helpful in providing means of comparison with the cults of the traditional gods. Although some critiques of his study are in order,²⁹⁰ the general orientation suggested by Price is indeed helpful in elucidating the nature of the Roman imperial cult. A survey of the impact of the Roman imperial cult indicates, then, a cult form that was integrated, with varying degrees of success, into the larger religious context of its day. Although it could serve political purposes, the cult forms nevertheless drew their imagery, rituals, offices, and language from the traditional cults. Rather than replacing these cults, the Roman imperial cult was integrated into that context, impacting the city and culture socially, politically, and religiously.

The preceding material has attempted to sketch out the broad patterns of emperor worship, particularly near the end of the first century C.E. in Asia Minor. As we turn once again to Revelation, John’s engagement with emperor worship as he encountered it in Asia Minor will be observed. It must be noted that for the study of the text of Revelation the key question ultimately is how John viewed and responded to the Roman imperial cult. Pagan objections aside, it is the Christian response found in Revelation that drives the study at hand. Momigliano has noted, “But there is one aspect of the imperial cult that must be stressed because it is essential. An

²⁸⁷ So Turcan, “La promotion du sujet,” 51, 55; contra Deissmann, *Licht*, 287.

²⁸⁸ Alföldy, “Subject and Ruler,” 255.

²⁸⁹ See Harland, “Honours and Worship,” 322; Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*; Friesen, *Imperial Cults*; and id., *Twice Neokoros*.

²⁹⁰ In addition to the objections noted above concerning nuances of sacrifices to/for the emperor, Price’s interpretation of the imperial cult as an attempt to accommodate the presence of the power of the emperor within the context of the Greek city faces some difficulty. Such an interpretation may hold with respect to cultic honors given to Augustus, but the interpretation becomes more difficult to sustain as one moves further away from the time of Augustus. When one reaches the time of Domitian or Hadrian, for example, Roman rule had been present for over a century. At that time, interest was still present in building provincial temples dedicated to the Roman emperor. During the time of Augustus, this was a relatively new innovation in the religious landscape; by the time of Domitian, however, the practice was well-established.

element of its strength was paradoxically the fact that it was *not* universally accepted.”²⁹¹ We will now turn our attention more carefully to the evidence in the book of Revelation indicating such a response.

The Roman Imperial Cult and Jesus in Revelation

Although the preliminary investigation at the outset of this chapter offered some points of comparison, I will now provide evidence of the relationship between emperor worship and John’s presentation of Jesus in Revelation.

As noted in the opening chapter, this line of investigation is not original to this thesis. In the first part of this section I will introduce, then, the theory of polemical parallelism, which has driven discussion within the past century regarding the relationship between emperor worship and the presentation of Jesus in Revelation. Next, I will provide evidence of this relationship in the second part of this section. Consideration will be given to the narrative of Revelation itself, and evidence of the contrasting presentations of Jesus and the beast from the sea will be covered. I will then discuss the relationship between images present in Revelation and features from the Roman imperial cult as observed in the preceding portion of this chapter. In the third and final part of this section, I will provide an assessment of the theory of polemical parallelism with a view toward the wider nature of John’s presentation of Jesus in Revelation.

Polemical Parallelism

In light of the potential references to Rome and to emperor worship in the text of Revelation, a number of scholars, particularly in the last century, have explored the relationship between the Roman imperial cult and Revelation.²⁹² Although some have suggested that Roman emperor worship provided terminology and conceptual

²⁹¹ Momigliano, *On Pagans*, 101, italics his.

²⁹² For a survey of trends, see Naylor, “Roman Imperial Cult and Revelation,” 218-225. Within recent years, several studies are of particular importance: see Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*; Kraybill, *Imperial Cults and Commerce*. Kraybill’s recent *Apocalypse and Allegiance* also provides a good overview of the issues.

categories for early Christians,²⁹³ scholars more commonly, especially as it relates to Revelation, observe a polemical attitude toward emperor worship within early Christianity. This section will briefly introduce the theory of “polemical parallelism,” which has played a central role in scholarly discussions of the relationship between Roman emperor worship and Revelation.

Although not dealing directly with Revelation, Deissmann’s *Licht vom Osten* has supplied one of the key descriptive phrases used with regard to the depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Deissmann, in addressing the relationship between early Christian convictions about Jesus and the use of similar terminology with respect to the Roman emperor, offers the following assessment:

The cult of Christ goes forth into the world of the Mediterranean and soon displays the endeavor to reserve for Christ the words already in use for worship in that world, words that had just been transferred to the deified emperors (or had perhaps even been newly invented in emperor worship). Thus there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the Gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial cult which sounded the same or similar.²⁹⁴

Properly speaking, Deissmann was addressing the development of the wider patterns of language used and not the usage in any one particular text. The imperial cult functioned not as a source of imagery but rather as a competing cult with language that happened to coincide with terms adopted from the LXX by early Christians.

With respect to the book of Revelation, this terminology of “polemical parallelism” has been picked up and applied by subsequent scholars in a slightly different manner. This second type of “polemical parallelism” deals with the particular literary parallelism used by John in the book of Revelation to depict Jesus and the emperor. Amongst those advocating such an approach, Stauffer provides a chief example in the chapter on “Domitian and John” in his *Christ and the*

²⁹³ See A. Y. Collins, “The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult”; Pieter J. J. Botha, “Assessing Representations of the Imperial Cult in New Testament Studies,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 25 (2004): 35-36.

²⁹⁴ The translation provided here is from Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 342.

Caesars.²⁹⁵ Following a lengthy description of the reign of Domitian, Stauffer describes a number of parallels that unfold in the narrative of the book of Revelation. He describes the following framework for the book of Revelation. Beginning in chapter one, we are introduced to the “Pontifex Maximus,”²⁹⁶ the true and triumphant ruler of the kings of the earth.²⁹⁷ In the chapters that follow, the messianic games unfold.²⁹⁸ As in the imperial games, Jesus begins with a series of edicts in chapters two and three.²⁹⁹ Like the emperor, Jesus is honored in the context of the throne-room.³⁰⁰ The messianic games then begin, as depicted in the various judgments.³⁰¹ The games end with the triumph of this heavenly ruler.³⁰² Regarding the closing chapters of Revelation, Stauffer notes, “Here too every word is a rejection of the imperial myth. The book of Revelation is a polemical book to the very end.”³⁰³

A number of recent scholars have taken a similar view of the imagery used of Jesus in Revelation.³⁰⁴ Within this approach, imagery in Revelation that bears a resemblance to that of the Roman imperial cult is highlighted. Jesus is demonstrated to be an alternative to or superior to the emperor, and, conversely, the emperor is depicted as an antichrist. Such an interpretive grid is often tied to persecution or social pressure as the explanation behind this imagery since it is frequently seen as contrasting with other more moderate approaches to Roman authorities within the New Testament. With this general orientation to the discussion in mind, attention

²⁹⁵ See pgs. 147-191. It should be noted that Stauffer’s refusal to provide any sort of reference to his sources has caused difficulty for those attempting to utilize his work.

²⁹⁶ Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 179.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 180.

²⁹⁸ Ibid. 180.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 180-181.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. 182.

³⁰¹ Ibid. 184-188.

³⁰² Ibid. 190.

³⁰³ Ibid. 191.

³⁰⁴ See Meggitt, “Taking the Emperor’s Clothes Seriously,” 157; Barnett, “Polemical Parallelism”; and id., “Revelation 12,” 297; J. D. Charles, “Imperial Pretension,” 87; Frey, “Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult,” 252; David A. DeSilva, “The ‘Image of the Beast’ and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13,” *TJ* 12 (1991): 201; Nestor P. Friedrich, “Adapt or Resist? A Socio-Political Reading of Revelation 2:18-29,” *JSNT* 25.2 (2002): 187.

will now be turned to the intersection of imperial cult themes and the depiction of Jesus in Revelation.

Evidence from Revelation

As we direct our attention again to the book of Revelation, I will now display the connection between John's use of imperial images and themes and his depiction of Jesus. As noted previously, the figure of the beast from the sea is likely intended to represent the Roman emperor. In the first part of this section, then, we will explore the relationship between the Lamb and the beast from the sea in Revelation. This relationship within the narrative demonstrates the contrast between Jesus and the emperor in Revelation. In the second part of this section, I will provide evidence of the images and themes in Revelation that appear to draw from the features of Roman emperor worship as discussed earlier in this chapter. These two lines of inquiry, then, will help to demonstrate the ways in which John adopts, subverts, and modifies imagery from the Roman imperial cult in his presentation of Jesus.

The Lamb and the Beast

Several areas suggest that the presentation of Jesus in Revelation should, at least in part, be seen as running parallel to the presentation of the beast from the sea.³⁰⁵

These parallels extend to the depictions of the two, the descriptions of the followers, the discussion of power and authority, and finally the worship offered to each. We will now consider each of these topics.

Depictions

Within the narrative of Revelation, certain parallels exist between the depictions of Jesus and the beast from the sea. When one considers the primary images used of Jesus in the Apocalypse, the image of the slain Lamb stands out as central from chapter five until the end of the book (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4 (x2), 14:10; 15:3; 17:14 (x2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27;

³⁰⁵ See Ford, *Revelation*, 219; Jan Willem van Henten, "Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12-13," in *Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (ed. David L. Barr; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 181; Frey, "Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult," 239.

22:1, 22:3). The primary opponent of the Lamb, in the narrative, is the beast from the sea. Although the particular imagery of the beast appears to be drawn from the book of Daniel, the juxtaposition of this imagery with that of the Lamb seems to be original to John.³⁰⁶ In addition to the broader narrative contrast between the Lamb and the beast, certain features of his depiction of each draw attention to this contrast. First, both the Lamb (5:6) and the beast from the sea (13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16) are pictured as having multiple horns.³⁰⁷ Next, both are depicted using the imagery of a lion. Jesus is said to be the “lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5) while the beast is said to speak with the “mouth of a lion” (13:2). Thirdly, the beast from the land, the representative of the beast from the sea, is said to speak like a lamb (13:11).³⁰⁸ Finally, Jesus, the beast from the sea, and the dragon are depicted as wearing crowns (12:3; 13:1; 19:12).³⁰⁹ The dragon and the beast from the sea are described as wearing seven and ten crowns, respectively (12:3; 13:1). This is contrasted by the image of Jesus as a rider on a white horse wearing “many crowns” (19:12).³¹⁰

Beyond these features, John also contrasts the death and resurrection of Jesus with the beast’s mortal wound and recovery. John makes reference to the blood of Jesus (1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11; 19:13 could also be a reference to Jesus’ own blood) and to Jesus as a lamb that was slain (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). These references to Jesus’ death occur more frequently, but the resurrection is also in view. Jesus is described as the “firstborn from the dead” (1:5) and the one who was dead and now lives (1:18; 2:8). In these ways, Revelation assumes the accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus. In contrast to this, the beast is depicted as suffering a mortal wound and recovering (13:3, 12, 14). According to 13:3, one of the heads is “slain unto death.” Interestingly, the verse uses the same verb (σφάζω) that was used of Jesus as a slain Lamb (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8.). The recovery of the beast is depicted as a “plague of death”

³⁰⁶ As Beale notes, “These parallels between Christ and the beast are closer than any extrabiblical parallels to the beast” (*Revelation*, 691). See also Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 56.

³⁰⁷ The dragon (12:3) and the beast from the land (13:11) are also depicted as possessing horns.

³⁰⁸ This does not argue against a parallel between the lamb and the beast from the sea. Such comparison may be intended to further show the counterfeiting of the works of the Lamb by the beast from the land and the beast from the sea.

³⁰⁹ Within these verses, διαδήματα is used. Crowns (στέφανοι) are used elsewhere as a reward for the faithful (2:10; 3:11) and are worn by the 24 elders (4:4, 10), the first horseman (6:2), the locusts (9:7), the woman clothed with the sun (12:1), and the “one like a son of man” (14:14).

³¹⁰ διαδήματα πολλά.

that was healed (13:3, 12). This is also described as a “plague of the sword” in 13:14. This recovery is only temporary, however, as the beast is eventually cast into the lake of fire. While Jesus died and now lives forever and ever (1:18), the beast that had the mortal wound and recovered is tormented forever and ever (20:10). It appears, then, that John is presenting the mortal wound and recovery of the beast from the sea as a sort of parody of the death and resurrection of Jesus.³¹¹

One final reference deserves consideration: the statement in 17:8 concerning the beast which was, is not, and is coming up from the abyss.³¹² Very similar phrases are used in five other places in the book of Revelation with respect to God (1:4, 8; 4:8; cf. 11:17; 16:5).³¹³ The application of these phrases to God and to the beast suggest different nuances, but the similarity in the use of this language suggests that a contrast between the two is likewise intended here.

Followers

Consideration of the descriptions of those who follow the Lamb and those who follow the beast reveals further examples of the contrasts between the two leaders.³¹⁴ Several images contribute to this theme:

First, both the followers of the Lamb and the followers of the beast are sealed or marked in some sense that identifies them as such.³¹⁵ Those who follow the Lamb are sealed on their foreheads (7:1-8). In contrast, the beast from the land forces those from all socio-economic backgrounds to receive the mark of the beast (13:16-17). In the narrative that follows, those who have received the mark are subject to God’s judgment (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20). Devotees of the Lamb, however, are characterized as those who have not received the mark (20:4; cf. 15:2).

³¹¹ See John Sweet, *Revelation* (TPINTC; London: SCM, 1990), 209-210; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 495; Beale, *Revelation*, 692.

³¹² ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου; the end of 17:8 reads: ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται.

³¹³ The threefold version is used in 1:4 (ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος), 1:8 (ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος), and 4:8 (ἀπὸ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος). A two-fold form is used in 11:17 (ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν) and 16:5 (ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν).

³¹⁴ In addition to the points of contrast noted here, attention could also be drawn to the contrast between Babylon and the city of God. For helpful comparisons in this regard, see Kroll, *Revelation*, 352-353; Wes Howard-Brook and Anthon Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (The Bible and Liberation Series; Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis, 1999), 160.

³¹⁵ This is linked with worship, a theme that will be explored separately.

This delineation between the followers of the beast and the followers of the Lamb is further communicated by descriptions of the beast's actions against the followers of Jesus. Those who refuse to worship the beast and receive his mark are subject to persecution and even death (13:15-17).

There is also similar language used to describe the makeup of each group. The Lamb is said to have purchased followers "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5:9).³¹⁶ The eternal gospel is likewise proclaimed to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (14:6).³¹⁷ Contrasted with this, those opposed to the people of God are described in the same manner. The authority of the beast from the sea is described as being over "every tribe, people, tongue, and nation" (13:7).³¹⁸ This designation of "tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations" seems to suggest the worldwide nature of the rule of the Lamb or rule of the beast.³¹⁹

Power and authority

An additional area of contrast is the nature of the authority held by each of these two figures. In the case of the beast, his power, throne, and authority are said to be given by the dragon (13:2). This bestowal of authority is also cause for people to worship the dragon (13:4). It is given for forty-two months and extends to every tribe, people, tongue, and nation (13:7). The associated powers of speaking great and blasphemous things (13:5-6), making war against and overcoming the saints (13:7), and leading the armies of the earth (16:14; 19:19) should likely be seen as stemming from this authority given by the dragon.³²⁰

³¹⁶ ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους. This same theme is repeated in 7:9, albeit with a change in order and number (παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν).

³¹⁷ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος καὶ φυλὴν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ λαόν. John is also instructed to prophesy in 10:11 concerning peoples, nations, tongues, and many kings (ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλῶσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς).

³¹⁸ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαόν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος. In addition, in 11:19, those from the "peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations" (λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἔθνῶν) look upon the bodies of the two witnesses. The waters upon which the harlot sits are interpreted in 17:15 as "peoples and crowds and nations and tongues" (λαοὶ καὶ ὄχλοι καὶ ἔθνη καὶ γλῶσσαι).

³¹⁹ See Bauckham, *Climax*, 326.

³²⁰ In addition to the authority given by the dragon, the beast also receives authority from the ten kings (17:12-13). The beast from the land, in turn, is said to carry forth the authority of the beast from the sea (13:12). It should be noted, however, that the use of ἐδόθη and the limiting of the time of this authority suggests that this is ultimately under the sovereignty of God. See Beale, *Revelation*, 695.

In the case of the Lamb, the authority is also shared. The source of the authority of the Lamb is shown to be God, the one who sits on the throne (2:26-28). The close association of the Lamb with the throne and the “One seated on it” forms an important theme throughout the book (5:6-7; 7:9-12; 22:1-3).³²¹

Jesus’ authority is portrayed with royal imagery as he is called the “ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5). Christians are portrayed as a kingdom, purchased with his blood (1:6; 5:10). God himself is identified as a king (15:3; cf. 11:17; 19:6), and God and Jesus together rule over the world (1:9; 11:15; 12:10). This kingship is likewise bestowed upon the followers of the Lamb, despite the actions of the beast (5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5) or the actions of Satan (12:10). Finally, Jesus is said to be the “king of kings” and the “lord of lords” (17:14; 19:16). These various elements serve to contrast Jesus’ rule with the kingship asserted by the beast and those allied with him.

Lastly, another motif associated with the power and authority of Jesus is that of military conquest, as depicted in the image of the rider on the white horse in chapter nineteen.³²² Although the beast from the sea is able to deceive the kings of the earth and assemble a great army in an attempt to defeat the Lamb (16:12-16; 17:12-14; 19:19), the victory is easily won by the rider on the white horse, who has the armies of heaven following behind him (19:14, 20-21).

Worship

One final observable contrast between the Lamb and the beast centers on the issue of worship. As the narrative unfolds, the people of the earth are largely divided into two groups: those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark,

³²¹ The throne imagery is first introduced in 1:4 as the seven spirits are said to be before the throne of God. With respect to Jesus, his throne is first mentioned in 3:21. The throne-room of God is introduced in 4:2, and the “one seated on the throne” becomes a major designation that continues throughout the rest of the book (see 4:2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9, 10, 11, 15; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4, 5; 20:11, 12; 21:3, 21:5). As chapters four and five unfold, the Lamb is first introduced. Here, the Lamb appears in the midst of the concentric circles and takes the scroll from the “One seated on the throne” (5:6-7). In the climactic vision of the New Jerusalem, the throne is noted to be shared (see 22:1, 3).

³²² Although some connect this with the first rider in Rev 6, it seems best to conclude that they do not both refer to Jesus. See Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1969), 229; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 2005), 488; Beale, *Revelation*, 376-377; contra R. J. Loenertz, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (trans. Hilary J. Carpenter; London: Sheed and Ward, 1947), 128.

and those who do not and instead follow the Lamb (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). Within Revelation, worship is given to Jesus and God alike (5:14), and hymns are offered both to Jesus alone (5:9-10, 12) and to God and Jesus together (5:13; 7:10). The prohibition against worshipping angelic beings indicates that proper worship is indeed a concern in Revelation (19:10; 22:8). John, then, provides a clear choice: either one worships the beast or one worships the Lamb.

Alternatives: Beast and Lamb

Within the narrative of Revelation, then, the beast from the sea and the Lamb are portrayed with contrasting images. John sets forth allegiance to the two as mutually exclusive options and challenges the reader to consider with whom he or she is choosing to side. Although not every aspect of the portrayal of the beast in Revelation can be shown as contrasting with the Lamb (and vice-versa), a bounty of parallels exist between the two, revealing that John intended to draw this contrast. If the beast is indeed to be seen in light of the Roman imperial cult, it is reasonable then to conclude, by way of the above contrast between the beast and the Lamb, that John intends to present Jesus in such a way that may be seen as a response to Roman emperor worship. We should expect, then, that other features of John's presentation of Jesus, apart from the contrast between the Lamb and the beast, likewise reflect imagery drawn from Roman emperor worship.

Jesus and the Roman Emperor

As one begins to compare the imagery in Revelation with materials related to emperor worship, certain common features emerge. Although a single case is not conclusive in and of itself, sufficient parallels exist to suggest that John has incorporated a number of features from his surrounding religious environment. We will direct our attention, at this stage, to the investigation of these parallels before providing an assessment of the nature of this relationship.

First, the worship of Jesus in Revelation and the worship of the Roman emperor bear certain similarities. One feature of the worship of Jesus in Revelation is the use of hymns and acclamations to associate Jesus with the "One seated on the throne" (5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10; cf. 4:11; 7:12). In similar fashion, groups of hymn-

singers were dedicated to the worship of the emperor.³²³ Acclamations, similar to those used in Revelation, were also associated with emperor worship.³²⁴

In addition, a number of cultic acts directed toward Jesus in Revelation may be seen as corresponding to features of emperor worship. As noted, the use of lamps as a cultic instrument within Roman emperor worship is attested.³²⁵ More than simply functioning as a general part of the décor within the temple, the lamps may have served the purpose of illuminating the cult statue at a key point during the ceremony. In Revelation, lamps also serve to illuminate the person of Jesus in chapter one. As John turns to see the voice speaking with him (1:12), he sees seven gold lamps. Among these stands “One like a son of man” (1:12-13). These lampstands are later interpreted in verse twenty of the same chapter as the seven churches. This identification serves to introduce the seven messages that form the content of the following two chapters. Another image utilized in the opening chapters is that of the crown. Faithful followers are offered, in the messages to the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia, the reward of a crown (2:10; 3:11).³²⁶ Within Roman emperor worship, crowns are also attested in an inscription from Pergamum,³²⁷ which notes the awarding of στεφάνοι to those participating in the ceremony. Incense may be observed as another point of comparison between emperor worship and the depiction of worship in Revelation. Within Revelation, incense is connected in two passages with the prayers of the saints. In 5:8, the twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb with bowls of incense, which are identified as the prayers of the saints.³²⁸ In 8:3-4, an angel holding a golden censer is given incense. This incense is offered with the prayers of the saints.³²⁹ In a text from

³²³ See *IvEph* 1a.18d; 3.742, 921; 7.2.3801; *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374; *IvSmyrna* 2,1.594. See Harland, “Imperial Cults,” 94-95; Touilleux, *L’Apocalypse et les Cultes de Domitien et de Cybele*, 100-103.

³²⁴ See J. D. Charles, “Imperial Pretensions,” 95-96; Morton, “Glory to God,” 99-101. See also Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 74, 79; Floyd O. Parker, Jr., “‘Our Lord and God’ in Rev 4:11: Evidence for the Late Date of Revelation?” *Bib* 82 (2001): 229-230; Schütz, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes und Kaiser Domitian*, 35.

³²⁵ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374. See Pleket, “Imperial Mysteries,” 337.

³²⁶ Here, στεφάνος is used.

³²⁷ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374. The crowns mentioned here are likewise στεφάνοι.

³²⁸ The implication, it appears, is that the incense is offered to the Lamb.

³²⁹ It appears here that the prayers function alongside the incense in chapter eight, whereas in chapter five they are equated.

Pergamum, incense is likewise used in the cultic ceremony.³³⁰ Pliny also testifies to the use of incense before the image of the emperor.³³¹

Third, as noted earlier, the theme of the “tongues, tribes, peoples, and nations” (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15) may demonstrate a connection with imperial ideology. This does function as a point of contrast between the Lamb and the beast in the narrative, but the usage of this theme may be intended to counter the notion of the Roman emperor as ruling on the basis of the consent of all the peoples.³³² In addition to these political overtones as well, this imagery could reflect the role played by emperor worship in providing a unifying force within the religious diversity of the empire.³³³

Next, the depiction of the throne in Rev 4 and 5 suggests further connections with Roman imperial imagery. Although elements of this depiction are drawn from texts such as Ezek 1 and Isa 6, most commentators recognize that a number of features here are distinctive in John’s usage. Some, such as Aune, have argued that certain features of this depiction in Revelation are drawn from the Roman imperial court context.³³⁴ He identifies parallels both in the structure of the heavenly court and in the particular acts that are mentioned in Rev 4-5.³³⁵ In his assessment, the imagery does not arise solely from the imperial court context; rather John makes use of Israelite and Hellenistic kingship traditions as well.³³⁶ The presence of imperial imagery would have served the purpose of demonstrating the throne-room of Caesar

³³⁰ IGR 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374. The term used in this case is λίβανον; Revelation uses θυμιάμα in chapters five and eight (λίβανον is used, however, in the list of cargo in chapter eighteen). Although different terms are used, it appears that the imagery is largely the same.

³³¹ Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 96.

³³² See *Res gest. divi Aug.* 34: per consensum universorum; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.15: nunc me deorum hominumque consensus ad imperium. See Morton, “Glory to God and to the Lamb,” 103; Aune, “Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial,” 18.

³³³ See Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 75.

³³⁴ Aune, “Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial”; see also Krodell, *Revelation*, 153; Morton, “Glory to God and to the Lamb”; and id., *One Upon the Throne*.

³³⁵ Aune, “Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial.” These include such features as the presence of lictors/senators before the throne (13-14), the scroll in the open hand (9), the use of hymns (14-15), white garments and crowns (13), and the use of “Lord and God” (20). J. D. Charles also notes that the concentric circles may also reflect Nero’s rotunda (“Imperial Pretension,” 94). The thunder and lightning associated with the throne in 4:5 could also reflect imagery originally associated with Zeus that was adopted in the imperial cults (see Dio 69.28.6; Morton, “Glory to God and to the Lamb,” 100; Scherrer, “Signs and Wonders,” 605-606).

³³⁶ Aune, “Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial,” 6.

to be merely a parody of the one in heaven.³³⁷ In similar fashion, others have connected the temple imagery in Revelation with imperial cult temples. As Wilkinson has argued, however, the imagery does not appear to be specific enough to warrant connection exclusively with Roman imperial temples.³³⁸

In addition to his work with the throne-room imagery, Aune's "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)" has provided an important assessment of the relationship between the literary genre of Rev 2-3 and imperial edicts in the first century.³³⁹ Aune notes certain parallels in form, particularly with regard to the prescript at the outset of each message.³⁴⁰ The edict of Claudius, recorded by Josephus, provides one such example of this form.³⁴¹ In this edict, Claudius is first identified as "Tiberius Claudius Caesar Sebastos Germanicus, of tribunician power."³⁴² The verb λέγω is used to introduce the main body, which also begins with an affirmation of the emperor's knowledge of the situation.³⁴³ In his article, Aune ultimately concludes that the genre of these messages is a mixture of prophetic discourse and imperial edicts. As we will see in the following chapter, connections with the former are persuasive. The use of features from the latter, however, also serves to challenge the authority of the emperor.³⁴⁴

Sixthly, Rev 12 may reflect anti-imperial polemic as well. This chapter is typically viewed as interacting with pre-existing myths.³⁴⁵ Although several forms exist, the Apollo-Leto-Python form is often regarded as the one lying behind Rev

³³⁷ Ibid. 5-6. Morton also argues that the readers would have been familiar with this imagery as a result of the travels of the Roman emperor and through depictions in art (*One Upon the Throne*, 118).

³³⁸ Richard H. Wilkinson, "The ΣΤΥΛΟΣ of Revelation 3:12 and Ancient Coronation Rites," *JBL* 107.3 (1988): 498; so also G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 197.

³³⁹ Aune, "Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches." See also Friedrich, "Adapt or Resist?" 187-188.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 187, 199-204. Stauffer likewise follows a similar approach in evaluating these messages as "imperial announcements" (*Christ and the Caesars*, 181).

³⁴¹ *Jos. Ant.* 19.280-285. On this, see Aune, "Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches," 202.

³⁴² *Jos. Ant.* 19.280.

³⁴³ *Jos. Ant.* 19.281-285.

³⁴⁴ Aune, "Form and Function," 204.

³⁴⁵ See, for example, Witherington, *Revelation*, 44; Ernest Findlay Scott, *The Book of Revelation* (3d ed.; London: SCM, 1940), 71; van Henton, "Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12-13," 185; Frey, "Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult," 251-252.

12.³⁴⁶ This particular myth, though not arising from the imperial context, is nevertheless significant for emperor worship due to associations of the emperor with Apollo.³⁴⁷ If John is indeed drawing upon this myth, he would then be placing Jesus, rather than the emperor, in the role of Apollo.³⁴⁸

Next, the image of the stars in Revelation (1:16, 20; 2:1, 28; 3:1, 22:16) likely reflects imagery utilized within emperor worship. Although connections may be made with Old Testament passages such as Num 24:17, some have linked the use of stars in Revelation with Roman imperial imagery, particularly as conveyed through the imperial coinage of the day.³⁴⁹ Within the context of the first century C.E., stars were associated with deified members of the imperial family. Janzen has suggested that the specific imagery of stars in the hand of the “One like a son of man” may draw from Flavian coinage depicting the deceased son of Domitian stretching his hands out toward seven stars.³⁵⁰ This imagery was also used in literary sources, as Martial connects the morning star with the emperor.³⁵¹

One particular phrase that has elicited much attention due to a potential connection with Domitian is found in 4:11, where the “One seated on the throne” is addressed as ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν. As noted previously in this chapter, these two terms were used independently to refer to the emperor. The collocation of the

³⁴⁶ For full treatment of the background of this imagery, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth and the Apocalypse* (HDR 9; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976). Hyginus, *Fabulae* 140 provides but one example of this myth.

³⁴⁷ See Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4; Dio 61.20.5; 63.20.5; L. R. Taylor, *Divinity*, 118-119; Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, I.1.80-81.

³⁴⁸ See David L. Balch, “‘A Woman Clothed with the Sun’ and the ‘Great Red Dragon’ Seeking to ‘Devour Her Child’ (Rev 12:1, 4) in Roman Domestic Art,” in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune* (NovTSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 287-314; van Henton, “Dragon Myth,” 182, 191-192; Frey, “Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult,” 251-252; Lucien Cerfaux and J. Tondrau, *Un concurrent du christianisme: le culte des souverains dans la civilisation gréco-romaine* (Bibliothèque de théologie 3/5; Tournai: Desclée, 1957), 335-336.

³⁴⁹ Janzen, “The Jesus of the Apocalypse.” For the significance of numismatics for the interpretations of the New Testament, see Larry J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (JSNTSup 134; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996); May, “The Empire Strikes Back”; and id., “Interpreting Revelation with Roman Coins.” See also Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* (JSNTSup 11; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 4.

³⁵⁰ BMC 311 #62-63; 347 #246; see Janzen, “Jesus of the Apocalypse,” 652-653; cf. Rev 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1.

³⁵¹ Martial *Epigr.* 8.21. See Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 191; Aune “Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial,” 11.

two here, however, may be significant due to the supposed acceptance of these titles by Domitian. Due to the traditional dating of Revelation to his reign and other evidences of polemic against the imperial cult, a number of commentators have seen the expression in 4:11 as reflecting a polemic against the practice of Domitian.³⁵² Two comments are necessary at this juncture. First, although no official documents exist that substantiate the claims of Suetonius, evidence that these titles were used of Domitian abounds.³⁵³ A demand on the part of Domitian is not necessary to explain John's use of this expression in Revelation. As mentioned earlier, the direct active participation of the emperor was not necessary at a local level within the various forms of emperor worship. Secondly, connections with Roman emperor worship in 4:11 need not stand or fall simply on the basis of an alleged connection with language preferred/accepted by Domitian. Both κύριος and θεός were terms applied to the emperor.³⁵⁴ If John indeed intends a parallel here with the language used in Roman emperor worship, this may be due to more widespread usage of these terms rather than a practice utilized by Domitian. One of the difficulties, admittedly, is how strongly one may assert this connection, as the terms κύριος and θεός occur regularly in other early Christian literature as appropriate ways to refer to the deity.

Next, the related themes of military might and victory may reflect imperial themes.³⁵⁵ The strength of an emperor was often seen through military power,³⁵⁶ and victories were commemorated visually through coins and other public works of art,

³⁵² See, for example, Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John* (BNTC 19; London: A & C Black, 2006), 89; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 119; Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 75; Lilje, *Last Book*, 108-109; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 240; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.310-312.

³⁵³ See Martial, *Epigr.* 4.67.4; 5.2.6; 5.5.1, 3, 4; 5.8.1; 6.64.14; 7.5; 7.8.2; 7.12.1; 7.34.8; 7.40.2; 7.45.7; 7.99.8; 8.1.1; 8.8.6; 8.31.3; 8.82.1-4; 9.20.2; 9.23.3; 9.24.6; 9.28.7-8; 9.65.2; 9.66.3; 9.101.23-24; but see also 10.72.3; Statius, *Silvae* 1.1.54; 3.4.101; 4 pref; 5.1.94; 1.1.62; 1.6.46-48, 81-84; 3.3.103, 110; 3.4.19-20; 4.2.6; 4.3.128-129; 5.1.42, 74, 112, 261; 5.2.170; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4 prooemium 5; Dio Chrysostom, *Def.* 1.

³⁵⁴ For κύριος: see *IGR* 4.1666; *IvEph* 2.412; 514B; 7.1.3245; *Syll*³ No. 814; cf. also Meyer, *Ostraka der Sammlung Deissmann*, nos 36a, 39, 40, 47, 59, 77, 86, 87. For θεός: see, for example, *IBM* 522, 892; *IGR* 3.719; 933; 4.201, 353, 1608c; *IvEph* 1a.18d; 2.232-233, 235, 237-238, 241-242, 266; 274; *IvEph* 2.404=SEG XXVI 1269; *IvEph* 2.428; 3.742; 4.1393; 5.1506. The emperor could also be said to be θεός ἐπιφανῆς. See *IGR* 3.328; *IvEph* 2.251; Dittenberger, *Sylloge*³ 2, 760.

³⁵⁵ Comblin, *Le Christ*, 164, 190-191; Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 228-229; Stanislas Giet, *L'Apocalypse et l'Histoire. Étude historique sur l'Apocalypse johannique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1957), 116.

³⁵⁶ See Dio 56.17.1; 63.20.5.

such as monuments and statues.³⁵⁷ In Revelation, victory is associated with Jesus (3:21; 5:5; 17:12-14; cf. 19:11-21) and with his followers as they remain faithful to him (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 12:11; 15:2-3; cf. 11:11-12; 20:4). The image of Jesus as a rider on a white horse (19:11-21) may also allude, more generally, to the Roman *triumph*³⁵⁸ and possibly to the equestrian statue of Domitian in Rome.³⁵⁹ In his use of this imagery, John challenges notions of victory associated with power and might³⁶⁰ as well as the association of ultimate victory with Rome.³⁶¹

Finally, although not present in the earliest texts of Revelation, John was later identified as a “theologos” in manuscripts of the book.³⁶² The “theologos” was one office connected with emperor worship.³⁶³ Allen Brent has argued that this identification may show that early interpreters of Revelation, by identifying John as a “theologos,” likewise connected the book with emperor worship.³⁶⁴ Brent argues that the use of the title “specifically implies that his contemporaries would have seen the literary production of his work as analogous to the function of the pagan official who bore this title in relation to the imperial cult and, by extension, with the imperial mysteries when celebrated as part of that cult.”³⁶⁵

Polemical Parallelism: An Assessment

In this final section, I will offer some assessment of the theory of polemical parallelism and suggest some avenues of investigation that may prove profitable in

³⁵⁷ The destruction of Jerusalem and the defeat of the Jewish revolt were celebrated through coins bearing the phrase IVDEA CAPTA and in the arch of Titus in Rome.

³⁵⁸ On this, see D. A. Thomas, *Revelation 19*.

³⁵⁹ See Statius, *Silvae* 1.1. It is difficult to determine, on this issue, the level of familiarity in the provinces with this statue. Reference to general military imagery in Rev 19 seems more likely.

³⁶⁰ Although connections with Jesus’ death and divine warrior imagery are more likely, there may also be some contrast with Roman military imagery, particularly if a reference to Jesus’ blood (19:13) is intended. Coulston notes the “Roman ideal of victory achieved without the loss of *Roman* blood.” See Jon Coulston, “Overcoming the Barbarian: Depictions of Rome’s Enemies in Trajanic Monumental Art,” 403.

³⁶¹ Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 229-230; Friedrich, “Adapt or Resist?” 207-208.

³⁶² This appears within the Byzantine traditions.

³⁶³ See *IvEph* 1a.22.1-8; 7.1.3015; *IGR* 4.353; *IvSm* 2,1.594.

³⁶⁴ Allen Brent, “John as Theologos: The Imperial Mysteries and the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 75 (1999): 87-102.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 87-88.

incorporating the findings of such studies. Although much could be said in this regard, I will offer four statements here in evaluation:

First, the notion of “polemical parallelism,” at least to some degree, can be sustained. The first type of “polemical parallelism,” as suggested by Deissmann, does seem likely with regard to certain titles such as κύριος, θεός, and υἱὸς θεοῦ. For these titles and concepts, a background in Jewish thought is more probable. As early followers of Jesus encountered the usage of these terms in Roman emperor worship, it seems likely that Christian usage could have taken on a polemical tone. When one moves to consider the presence of imperial cult language and imagery in Revelation, it appears that a case may be made for the second type of “polemical parallelism” on the basis of cumulative evidence. On a literary level, the Lamb and the beast function as contrasting images. As it relates to the wider imagery used in Revelation, a case can be made that John is drawing from the general imagery of the imperial cult, both in his representation of the beast and in certain aspects of his presentation of Jesus. Insofar as we are aware, however, John is not interacting with one particular instance of emperor worship. Rather, he is drawing freely from the wider language and imagery available to him and his readers through the various expressions of emperor worship in civic life.

Second, as one considers the presence of imperial cult imagery, more reflection is needed upon wider themes and not just simple points of intersection. The way in which certain images are used suggests that John is not merely selecting images from emperor worship that parallel already existing images within the Old Testament writings or early Christian usage. Rather, it appears that John is creatively engaging the imagery, themes, and worldview of the cultural context in which he writes. In some cases, John utilizes the imagery associated with the emperor in a subversive way that challenges the claims of the emperor.³⁶⁶ The overall portrait that emerges in Revelation suggests that John has deliberately crafted his material to portray Jesus as an alternative to the emperor. This suggests that although “polemical parallels” may be present, John’s depiction of Jesus reflects more intentional shaping on his part to underline this contrast.

³⁶⁶ The military and victory imagery, for example, challenge the notion of victory connected with the emperor.

Third, attention must also be given to how John incorporates and assesses Roman imperial cult imagery with respect to imagery drawn ostensibly from the Old Testament. In a number of cases, John assesses the Roman empire, the emperor, or emperor worship with interpretive categories that arise from certain Old Testament writings or from Second Temple Judaism. The beast from the sea, representing the Roman emperor, draws its authority from Satan (13:2, 4). The imagery of the beast from the sea appears to be creatively drawn from Dan 7. The beast from the land, in turn, draws its authority from the first beast and thus ultimately from Satan (13:12-15). In addition, both may draw from traditions concerning Leviathan and Behemoth.³⁶⁷ The image of the beast (13:14-15) evokes associations with the image of Nebuchadnezzar from Dan 3. Rome is depicted as Old Testament Babylon (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21), and her judgment (Rev 18) is described in words that allude to Jer 51. The throne-room scene (Rev 4-5), while drawing from certain imperial themes, also incorporates significant imagery from Isa 6 and Ezek 1. In these ways, identification of imperial themes helps to draw attention to John's underlying framework. Although John incorporates imagery from emperor worship, it is significant that this is done with an attempt to maintain a level of continuity with imagery and themes from the Old Testament writings.

Finally, due consideration must be given to John's creativity and use of imagery. Therefore, assessments of John's presentation of Jesus must move beyond a purely "polemical parallels" approach. As one considers John's methodology more broadly, certain features emerge. Though the imperial cult imagery is not the primary source for John's depiction of Jesus, it nevertheless plays an important part in the overall portrait. The "polemical parallels" approach does highlight certain features of the imagery used, but such an approach fails to account for both the overall portrait of Jesus and the particular ways in which the imperial cult imagery is used in Revelation. A stronger case can be made for the relationship between images in Revelation and certain Old Testament writings. Certain images in Revelation draw from this background with little or no relationship to emperor worship. Studies on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation have largely tended to focus on either the Roman imperial cult or the Old Testament as the source for John's imagery. Assessing the nature of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus, however, must

³⁶⁷ Cf. Job 40-41; Amos 9:3; 4 *Ezra* 6:49-52; 2 *Bar* 29:4.

involve more than the determination of the sources used by John for particular images and themes in Revelation. Although consideration of the context of early Christianity and the pastoral concerns motivating John may help to shed further light on the imagery he uses, greater attention must also be paid to John's literary creativity. With regard to the imperial cult, it appears that the primary motivation for John's approach is neither the encroachment of the "political" into the "religious" sphere or the persecution of Christians but rather his underlying convictions concerning Jesus. These convictions have caused John both to critically engage emperor worship and to creatively incorporate elements from it into the portrait he paints of Jesus. Investigations of the presentation of Jesus in Revelation must, therefore, move beyond polemical parallelism to consider the complexity of John's presentation of Jesus. We will now turn our attention to the influence of a second main source for John's imagery: the writings comprising the Old Testament.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN, JESUS, AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

One of the most significant sources, if not the most significant, for the imagery employed by John in Revelation is the body of writings which comprise the Old Testament.¹ One of the features of John's use of the Old Testament, particularly in comparison with the other New Testament books, is the lack of clear citations. Throughout the book, however, there are many images and themes that bear a strong resemblance to a variety of Old Testament scriptures.² In his presentation of Jesus, John also appears to employ a variety of symbols, titles, and themes from the Old Testament writings. In this present chapter we will consider the way in which John has drawn from the Old Testament in his depiction of Jesus.

One of the difficulties associated with this line of inquiry is the nature of John's use of the Old Testament. While most would allege a strong relationship between the imagery employed in Revelation and the Old Testament, there is disagreement concerning the way in which John has drawn material from these writings. The methodological concerns have largely been twofold. First, given the lack of formal quotations in Revelation, to what degree can one be certain of the

¹ Most scholars assume that John has developed his imagery from a variety of Old Testament texts. On the significance of the OT for John, see Bauckham, *Climax*, x-xi; Beale, *Revelation*, 77; Jon Paulien, "Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (ed. Steve Moyise; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 113. Within recent years, a number of significant studies have taken into consideration John's methodology as a whole and the particular engagement John shows with certain key Old Testament books. See J. Cambier, "Les images de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Apocalypse de saint Jean," *NRTh* 77 (1955): 113-122; Albert Vanhoye, "L'Utilisation du Livre d'Ézéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Bib* 43 (1962): 436-476; T. E. McComiskey, "Alteration of OT Imagery in the Book of Revelation: Its Hermeneutical and Theological Significance," *JETS* 36 (1993): 307-316; Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (JSNTSup 93; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1994); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Gregory K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); and id., *Use of Daniel*; Marko Jauhiainen, *The Use of Zechariah in Revelation* (WUNT 2/199; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2005); David Mathewson, "Isaiah in Revelation," in *Isaiah in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 189-210.

² As noted by Fekkes, estimates of the number of allusions in Revelation to the Old Testament vary considerably, from 250 to 700 in the book as a whole (Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 62).

presence of an allusion to a particular Old Testament passage? In addressing this question, scholars have varied quite significantly regarding the number of allusions identified within Revelation and the criteria by which one may establish the presence of an allusion.³ Second, once the presence of an allusion may be established, does the original context in the Old Testament influence its meaning in Revelation? Some, such as Fiorenza, have argued that John merely draws upon the wealth of images and terms from his religious background without respect for the Old Testament context.⁴ Others have answered quite affirmatively, suggesting that John always writes with the Old Testament context in mind as he adapts the material to his own context, even if he has applied it in a different manner in Revelation.⁵ Moyise has taken a more moderate approach, arguing that the Old and New Testament contexts inform each other.⁶

As we will see in this chapter, similar difficulties exist in John's use of the Old Testament in his depiction of Jesus in particular. In some cases, verbal and thematic parallels indicate that an allusion to an Old Testament passage is highly likely.⁷ In other instances, it is far less clear. Allusions must be considered, then, on a case by case basis, and connections must be established according to varying degrees of probability. Likewise, the relationship between Revelation and the context in the Old Testament will be shown to vary depending both upon the nature of the material alluded to and the type of allusion utilized by John. In some cases, it appears that the Old Testament context has shaped the use of the material in

³ On this issue, see Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 43-44; and id., *John's Use*, 62-63; Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxlix-clv. Paulien clearly discusses the methodological concerns in "Criteria and Assessment," 113-129.

⁴ Fiorenza, *Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 135-136.

⁵ See Beale, *John's Use*, 73-74; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 287.

⁶ Moyise, *Old Testament*, 18-20. On this issue, Moyise and Beale exchanged a series of articles in *IBS* (see Steve Moyise, "The Old Testament in the New: A Reply to Greg Beale," *IBS* 21 (1999): 54-58; G. K. Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Old Testament in the New: A Rejoinder to Steve Moyise," *IBS* 21 (1999): 152-180; and Steve Moyise, "Seeing the Old Testament through a Lens," *IBS* 23 (2001): 36-41).

⁷ One additional challenge associated with identifying verbal parallels is the uncertainty regarding whether John used a Greek or Hebrew version of the Old Testament writings. Within the present chapter, attention will be given to both the MT and LXX where relevant. Cases may legitimately be made for both the Hebrew (see R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxvi-lxviii) and Greek texts (Swete, *Apocalypse*, cliv-clv). A. Y. Collins, following Barthélemy, suggests that John may have been following a different recension of the Greek text that stood in between the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Old Testament (*Crisis and Catharsis*, 48). See also Beale, *Old Testament in Revelation*, 61-62; Moyise, *Old Testament*, 17; Paul Trudinger, "Some Observations Concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," *JTS* 17 (1966): 82-88; Vanhoye, *Ézéchiel*, 443-461.

Revelation; in others, as we will see, it appears that John has creatively adapted the imagery from the Old Testament.

Within the first part of this chapter, I will discuss images and themes used of Jesus which may be considered “major” due to their prevalence and/or significance within Revelation. This includes such images and motifs as the “lamb” imagery, the heavenly throne, the glorious depiction in 1:12-20, and the rider on the white horse. In the second part of this chapter, we will examine images and titles occurring less frequently within Revelation. Discussion will begin with those found in Rev 1 and continue with these “minor” images and titles in the order in which they appear in Revelation. Within these two sections, our attention will be directed chiefly toward the writings comprising the Old Testament, but, where relevant, relationships with Jewish writings from the Second Temple period will also be noted. In the final portion of this chapter, then, I will discuss the level of familiarity with the Old Testament writings that John appears to expect of his readers and the wider patterns that emerge in his presentation of Jesus vis-à-vis the Old Testament writings.

Major Images and Themes

We will now investigate themes that play a significant role in the narrative in Revelation or have traditionally been addressed as an important aspect of John’s presentation of Jesus. We will explore here the figure of the “Lamb,” the throne imagery, the possible employment of angelomorphic imagery, and the rider on the white horse. We will give primary consideration here to the relationship of these images to suggested sources in the Old Testament, but developments in the narrative of Revelation will also be explored. It is to the “Lamb” that we will first turn.

Lamb

Amongst the different images used by John to depict Jesus in Revelation, the image of the “Lamb” stands out in many ways as the most significant.⁸ First introduced in

⁸ For studies on the Lamb imagery used in Revelation, the recent study by Johns is particularly significant (Johns, *The Lamb Christology*). A number of other studies have been conducted regarding this imagery: see Carres, “Le deployment de la christologie de l’Agneau dans l’Apocalypse,” 5-17; Barrett, “The Lamb of God,” 210-218; Blount, “Wreaking Weakness,” 285-302; D’Souza, *The Lamb of God*; Guthrie, “The Lamb,” 64-71; Hillyer, “The Lamb,” 228-236; Hofius, “*Arnion* – Widder oder Lamm?” 272-281; Inman, “Lamb of God,” 191-197; Mounce, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 60-69; Whale,

Rev 5, the term ἄρνιον is used twenty-eight times in reference to Jesus (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4 (x2), 10; 15:3; 17:14 (x2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3).⁹ As Bauckham notes, the frequency does not appear to be accidental.¹⁰ The term is also employed in several texts that associate Jesus with the throne (see Rev 5 (passim); 7:9, 17; 22:1, 3).¹¹

In addition to the use of the term ἄρνιον, John also employs the imagery of “slaughter” (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8),¹² seven horns (5:6),¹³ and the seven eyes (5:6; cf. 1:4)¹⁴ in his depiction of the Lamb. As noted in the previous chapter, the image of the Lamb also contrasts with that of the beast from the sea within the wider narrative. The term ἄρνιον does function in some respects as a title, but it nevertheless retains its force as an image in Revelation.¹⁵

Although its significance for John appears easily substantiated, the source of the imagery is far less clear. The particular term used, ἄρνιον, appears infrequently in the LXX and NT,¹⁶ and none of these occurrences, on its own, provides a sufficient

“Lamb of John,” 289-295; Morton, *One Upon the Throne*; Unnik, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 445-461; Läßle, “Das Geheimnis des Lammes,” 53-58; Bergmeier, “Das Buchrolle und das Lamm,” 225-242; J. D. Charles, “Apocalyptic Tribute,” 461-473; Stuhlmacher, “Das Lamm Gottes,” 529-542; Barr, “The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon?” 205-220; Skaggs and Doyle, “Lion/Lamb in Revelation,” 362-375; Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt*, 192-203.

⁹ It is also applied to the beast from the land, which is described as having two horns like a lamb (13:11).

¹⁰ Bauckham, *Climax*, 34-35; and id., *Theology*, 66-67.

¹¹ So Carres, “Le Deploiement,” 6; Guthrie, “The Lamb,” 64.

¹² Greek: σφάζω.

¹³ The “horns” here are typically seen as a symbol of power. See Deut 33:17; 1 Kgs 22:11; Ps 89:17; Dan 7:7-8:24. See Beale, *Revelation*, 351; Smalley, *Revelation*, 132; D’Souza, *Lamb of God*, 73. This also forms a point of contrast in the depictions of Jesus and the beast from the sea. For the beast, see 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16. The dragon (12:3) and the beast from the land (13:11) are also depicted as having horns.

¹⁴ The seven eyes are interpreted in the surrounding context as the seven spirits of God. This connects back to the usage in 1:4, and it has been seen as representing the Holy Spirit (see G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 61; Bauckham, *Theology*, 110-111; cf. Isa 11:2 (LXX) and Zech 4:2, 6, 10) or the seven chief angels (see R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.11-13; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.34-35). This imagery may also be drawn from Zech 3:9; 2 Chr 16:9 (see Beale, *Revelation*, 355). Although a reference to angels is possible, it seems best to connect this with the Spirit of God. See Jauhiainen, *Zechariah*, 86-89.

¹⁵ So Slater, *Christ and Community*, 164; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 21.

¹⁶ This diminutive form is found in five verses in the LXX and once in the NT outside Revelation. See Ps 113:4, 6; Jer 11:19; 27:45; *Ps. Sol.* 8.23; John 21:15. Johns notes that ἄρνιον is used for a young sheep or lamb in all references from literature predating Revelation (*Lamb Christology*, 22).

explanation for the imagery in Revelation.¹⁷ Most scholars would agree that John has drawn from Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish imagery in depicting Jesus as the Lamb, but there is widespread disagreement concerning the text(s) from which John draws these depictions.¹⁸ Potential source(s) of imagery can be divided into three main categories:¹⁹ texts dealing with a lamb as a sacrificial victim, texts utilizing a lamb as an image of vulnerability, and texts describing a victorious lamb. Within this section, I will present the relative data and provide evaluation of each category.

*Lamb as a Symbol of Sacrifice/Passover Lamb*²⁰

Within the Old Testament writings, lambs are associated with sacrifices in several contexts, such as the sacrificial system centered at the tabernacle/temple (Exod 29:38-41; Num 28:1-10, 16-25, 26-31; 29:1-6, 7-11, 12-40),²¹ the ram/lamb of Gen 22,²² and the lamb slaughtered in remembrance of the Passover (Exod 12:1-30, 43-49; Num 9:1-14; 28:16-25; Deut 16:1-8; 2 Chr 30:1-27; Ezra 6:19-21).²³ Although

¹⁷ A variety of suggestions have been offered to explain the use of ἀρνίον rather than one of the more commonly used terms. For a summary of the options, see Mounce, "Christology," 43. Some have suggested that the particular choice of ἀρνίον results from the contrast with the θηρίον. The use of ἀρνίον instead of the more common ἄνθος would provide a term with a similar ending to help emphasize this pairing in Revelation. See Thomas Francis Glasson, *The Revelation of John: Commentary* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge, 1965), 44. Reddish suggests that John employed this term to avoid sacrificial connotations (Reddish, "Martyr Christology," 87), but this is unlikely due to other related themes in Revelation.

¹⁸ Some connections with Greco-Roman culture have been suggested (see Fiorenza, *Vision of a Just World*, 60; Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 40-75; Touilleux, *L'Apocalypse et les cultes de Domitien et de Cybèle*, 110-116). Although possible, this does not appear to have directly influenced the imagery in Revelation.

¹⁹ Johns notes seven potential sources in the Old Testament, but these can largely be summarized under the three headings chosen here (see *Lamb Christology*, 128).

²⁰ See Aune, *Revelation*, 1.371-373; Guthrie, "Christology," 400; Guthrie, "Lamb in the Structure of Revelation," 69; Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11-22.15* (SBT 23; London: SCM, 1972), 9; E. F. Scott, *Revelation*, 64; Fiorenza, *Vision of a Just World*, 60.

²¹ See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 128-130; Stuhlmacher, "Das Lamm Gottes," 529-542.

²² See Austin Marsden Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (London: Dacre Press, 1949), 106; Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace*, 188-189. Johns discusses the possible influence of the Aqedah traditions, where Isaac is seen as acting as a willing martyr (*Lamb Christology*, 137-140). Although these traditions appear to have pre-Christian origins, it seems unlikely that this has served as the source for the lamb imagery in Revelation.

²³ See Aune, *Revelation*, 1.372; Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 130-133; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 26-31; Holtz, *Christologie*, 44-47; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 125; Eugenio Corsini, *The Apocalypse: The Perennial Revelation of Jesus Christ* (trans. and ed. Francis J. Moloney; GNS 5; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983), 133; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of the Revelation: A Commentary*

one may connect the image of the “lamb” in Revelation with one of these specific contexts, it is also possible that John employs this image due to its association with sacrifice more broadly.²⁴ One of the chief arguments for associating the Lamb of Revelation with lambs mentioned in sacrificial contexts is the specific description of the Lamb as “slain” (ἐσφαγμένον) in 5:6. For John, this depiction of the “lamb” as “slain” appears to be a key emphasis (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). This language is related to statements elsewhere describing the blood of Jesus (1:5; 5:9), which seem to suggest at least some allusion to the sacrificial context.

The imagery of a slain lamb may suggest that John is drawing from these texts in the Old Testament, but the terminology, unfortunately, does not allow for a more specific identification of the text(s) used by John. If John was intending an allusion to the sacrificial system, the verb θύω would be expected.²⁵ Likewise, if an allusion to Passover was intended, the more appropriate term πάσχα would be expected.²⁶ This need not suggest, however, that John was not drawing from imagery related to sacrifice in the Old Testament.²⁷ Even though the terminology used for “lamb” prevents the identification of a specific background text, the term used for slaughter in Revelation (σφάζω) does appear in contexts related to Old Testament sacrifices²⁸ and the Passover.²⁹ Additionally, John employs imagery

(Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1990), 79; Koester, *Revelation*, 78; Ladd, *Revelation*, 85-86; Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John: A Continental Commentary* (trans. John E. Alsup; CC; Mineapolis: Fortress, 1993), 79; R. W. Wall, *Revelation* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 98; J. Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 118; Inman, “This is the Lamb of God,” 192; Alan James Beagley, *The “Sitz im Leben” of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church’s Enemies* (BZNW 50; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1987), 27-28; D’Souza, *Lamb of God*, 25-27; Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse et liturgie* (CahT 52; Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1964), 77; Talbert, “Christology,” 169; Söding, “Gott und Lamm,” 89. Fiorenza argues that there are some echoes of the Passover theme with the use of the lamb imagery, but this imagery deals more with redemption than expiation (*Justice and Judgment*, 95-97). Gieschen also suggests that this connection may have been strengthened by the connection between the Eucharist and the Passover in the early church (“The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne,” 240).

²⁴ Aune notes the difficulty in determining which cultic context may lie behind the imagery used in Revelation (see *Revelation*, 1.372).

²⁵ Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 129.

²⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 5:7. See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 131-132. He also notes that the word “lamb” was not used by Jews in the New Testament times to refer to the Passover victim (133).

²⁷ Contra Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 128-133; Sophie Laws, *In Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John* (GNS 31; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 29.

²⁸ See Exod 29:16, 20 (LXX); Lev 1:5, 11 (LXX). Johns concedes that this term is used but distinguishes between the slaughter of the animal and the more general offering in sacrifice (*Lamb Christology*, 129).

²⁹ See Exod 12:6 (LXX).

drawn from the Exodus elsewhere in Revelation that would suggest a natural connection between the lamb imagery in Revelation and the Passover lamb (15:3-4).³⁰ It is likely, then, that themes from the Old Testament related to the sacrifice of lambs lie, at least in part, behind the imagery used in Revelation.

Lamb as a Symbol of Vulnerability/Suffering Servant

John may also draw from a set of texts that employ the image of a lamb as a means of connoting vulnerability and weakness.³¹ In terms of Old Testament roots, several texts have been suggested as contributing to this imagery. Chiefly, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:7 has been suggested.³² In Isa 53:7, the servant is described as a lamb being led to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers (ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγῆν ἤχθη καὶ ὡς ἄμνος ἐναντίον τοῦ κείροντος αὐτὸν ἄφωνος). Despite the fact that Revelation does not use the same term for “lamb” as Isaiah,³³ thematic connections are evident. The lamb of Isa 53, through its death (Isa 53:5-6; cf. Rev 1:5; 5:9-10), is cause for the salvation of a great number (Isa 53:12; cf. Rev 5:9-10; 7:9-10; 14:1-5)³⁴ and enjoys long-lasting life (cf. Isa 53:10; Rev 5:6; 14:1).³⁵

Loren Johns has also highlighted a collection of texts that employ the image of a lamb in order to depict elements of vulnerability and weakness.³⁶ He considers the main examples to be Jer 11:19, Ps 114, and *Ps. Sol.* 8.³⁷ Within these texts, the

³⁰ So Bauckham, *Theology*, 70.

³¹ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 78; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.368-371; Koester, *Revelation*, 79; Hillyer, “The Lamb,” 228; Margaret Barker, “Enthronement and Apotheosis: The Vision of Revelation 4-5,” in *New Heaven and New Earth – Prophecy and the Millennium: Essays in Honor of Anthony Gelston* (ed. P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward; VTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 220.

³² See Comblin, *Le Christ*, 17-47. Comblin views the imagery in Revelation as a combination of Isa 53 with the Passover Lamb imagery, in keeping with New Exodus themes in Isaiah (30). The employment for the Lamb as an image of the servant of Isaiah provides, for Comblin, a chief example of John’s use of imagery from the latter portion of Isaiah (see 34-43).

³³ The LXX here uses the terms πρόβατον and ἄμνος to translate אֶזְרָא and אֶלֶף, respectively.

³⁴ Comblin, *Le Christ*, 31.

³⁵ Ibid. 31.

³⁶ Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 145-149. Johns also investigates the use of ἀρνίον more broadly in the LXX and concludes that all the uses of the term are symbolic (147). See also Martin Hengel, “Die Throngemeinschaft des Lammes mit Gott in der Johannesapokalypse,” in *Studien zur Christologie* (ed. Claus-Jürgen Thornton; WUNT 201/4; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2006), 371.

³⁷ Johns also notes examples in 2 Sam 12:1-6; Isa 11:6; 34:6; 53:7; 65:25; Jer 50:45; 51:40; Mic 5:7; Sir 13:17; and Wis 19:9. See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, 78.

image of a lamb symbolizes one who is vulnerable before a greater power (Ps 114) or before one's enemies (Jer 11:19; *Ps. Sol.* 8:23). Johns also discusses the LXX version of Micah 5:6, which departs significantly from the Hebrew text.³⁸ The LXX describes the remnant of Jacob as being like "lambs" (ἄρνες) in a pasture.³⁹ This image is then followed with that of a "lion" (λέων) in the following verse. Such an example could provide a parallel with the juxtaposition of a vulnerable lamb with a lion, as in Rev 5:5-6.⁴⁰

In some ways, these thematic links are compelling. The image of a vulnerable lamb would correspond well to statements elsewhere depicting the vulnerability of the Lamb's followers before the beast and its followers (6:9; 13:7, 15; 17:6; 18:24; 20:4). It does not appear, however, that this alone can explain the imagery of the "lamb" in Revelation, as the associated themes of slaughter and redemption provide too strong a link to other Old Testament passages.

Lamb as a Symbol of Victory/Messianic Ram

In contrast to interpretations noted above, some scholars have suggested that the "lamb" should instead be seen as a symbol of victory.⁴¹ Within Revelation, the references to the victory of the Lamb (5:5; 17:14) and the description of the seven horns (5:6) may be seen as suggesting such an interpretation.⁴² The most important support, however, for this interpretation is drawn from Jewish writings of the Second Temple period, such as *T. Jos.* 19:8; *T. Benj.* 3:8; and *I En.* 90.

The first two texts, *T. Jos.* 19:8 and *T. Benj.* 3:8, both refer to a lamb in a manner similar to the depiction in Revelation. *T. Jos.* 19:8 describes a lamb coming forth from a virgin. This lamb then faces the onslaught of the wild animals and

³⁸ See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 140-143.

³⁹ Ibid. 140. In this instance, the image is used to describe the remnant among the Gentiles.

⁴⁰ Johns notes, however, that, due to difficulties with the history of the text, the potential influence is suggestive but not conclusive (*Lamb Christology*, 143).

⁴¹ R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.cxiii, 141. Charles argues for a merging of the themes of lamb as victim and lamb as conqueror (*Revelation*, 1.cxiii). See also Mounce, *Revelation*, 133; and id., "Christology," 43-44; "Worthy is the Lamb," 68; Hillyer, "The Lamb," 229; Guthrie, "The Lamb," 64; Morton, *One Upon the Throne*, 158-160.

⁴² The seven horns of the Lamb in Revelation would signify its total power. See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.141. Johns also notes that while links could be made to the imagery of the lamb and goat from Dan 8, scholars have "wisely" avoided taking this route (*Lamb Christology*, 136).

emerges victorious. Next, *T. Benj.* 3:8, although not demonstrating the same emphasis upon the victory of a “lamb” figure, does refer to “the Lamb of God, the Savior of the World.”⁴³ This lamb is betrayed by sinful men and dies for the sake of “impious men.” Initially, *T. Jos.* 19:8 and *T. Benj.* 3:8 may appear to offer convincing sources for the imagery in Revelation, but both texts reflect heavy Christian influence.⁴⁴ It does not appear that one can identify an underlying Jewish source here in such a way that would provide substantial evidence for the existence of this tradition prior to the writing of Revelation.

For *1 En.* 90, the relevant material does appear to pre-date the Christian period and therefore would supply a more plausible source.⁴⁵ In *1 En.* 90:9, one of the sheep is described as sprouting a great horn. This sheep struggles against the birds of the air and cries out for divine help.⁴⁶ As in the case of *T. Jos.* 19:8, the lamb is depicted here as fighting against the enemies of the people of God. Due to its dating, *1 En.* 90 offers a more probable example of a victorious lamb/ram. One of the difficulties, however, is the imagery itself in *1 En.* 90. On the surface, *1 En.* 90 appears to offer a compelling example of a warrior lamb. Upon closer examination, however, the image used here is of a ram, not a lamb, which conquers.⁴⁷ Although the image of a ram plays an important role in this narrative, the ultimate symbol of victory that emerges in *1 En.* 90 is that of a great bull with black horns.⁴⁸

In light of these considerations, it seems unlikely that John is drawing from these texts which appear to depict a victorious/conquering lamb. One of the main problems here is the question of whether one is able to substantiate the existence of

⁴³ OTP 1.826

⁴⁴ So Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 80-88.

⁴⁵ See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 88-89; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 361; Patrick A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (SBLEJL 4; Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), 78-79.

⁴⁶ This figure is likely to be identified with Judas Maccabeus. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 396. David Bryan, *Cosmos, Chaos and the Kosher Mentality* (JSPSup 12; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 69, 180; Tiller, *Animal Apocalypse*, 355.

⁴⁷ Although one could suggest that the presence of horns on the lamb in Rev 5:6 suggests that a ram is in view (so G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 256), a lamb could properly be conceived of as having horns. Johns notes examples from Homer (*Od.* 4.85) and Aristotle (*Hist. An.* 7.596a.18-19) that suggest that lambs developed horns from birth (Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 24).

⁴⁸ *1 En.* 90:37; see Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 88-97; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 406; Tiller, *Animal Apocalypse*, 384-385.

such a figure in Second Temple Judaism prior to the composition of Revelation.⁴⁹

The most prominent example, *T. Jos.* 19:8, exhibits the marks of Christian influence and cannot be dated conclusively as pre-Christian. Even if the image of a conquering lamb may be posited in Second Temple Judaism, the image in Revelation of a seven-horned redeeming lamb appears to be unique to this author.⁵⁰ Likewise, the imagery used in *1 En.* 90, though depicting a warrior ram, does not provide a compelling source for the imagery in Revelation. John does depict the Lamb as victorious (5:6; 17:14), but it does not appear that he is drawing upon traditions from these sources in Revelation.

Summary

As may be seen from the above discussion, a strong case can be made that John has drawn his imagery from the Old Testament and/or texts from Second Temple Judaism.⁵¹ The difficulty, however, lies in discerning which source(s) is most significant for explaining the usage in Revelation. This difficulty is a result both of the lack of direct verbal connections to any one particular source and the association of the “lamb” with other images in Revelation. In light of the various texts and arguments, it may be best to conclude that John has employed the image in an intentionally complex way.⁵² Since John appears to have been familiar with themes

⁴⁹ See Laws, “In the Light of the Lamb,” 28; Bauckham, *Climax*, 183.

⁵⁰ See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 76-107; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.353, 368; Smalley, *Revelation*, 133.

⁵¹ Although it is probable that texts from the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism provided the sources of John’s imagery, it seems unlikely that John has based this imagery solely on reflection upon these texts. The imagery of a slain lamb likely reflects usage within early Christianity. A number of NT passages draw upon this Old Testament background in describing the meaning of Jesus’ death (Acts 8:32-35; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19; cf. John 13:1; 19:14, 31). It does not appear that John is adopting the imagery directly from any of these passages, but it seems very likely that John would have been familiar with the general imagery of Jesus as a lamb. The relationship between the image of the lamb in Revelation and its usage in other early Christian texts will be addressed in the following chapter. See also Holtz, *Christologie*, 44.

⁵² Reddish argues that this should be seen as a “multivalent symbol” (“Martyr Christology,” 88; see also Beck, “Christology,” 276; Jonathan Knight, *Revelation* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 64). As a result of this complexity, scholars have suggested various combinations of these themes. For a combination of sacrificial imagery and martyrdom theme, see Bredin, *Jesus Revolutionary of Peace*, 182, 199. For a combination of Passover and servant imagery, see Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (ed. Daniel J. Harrington; SP 16; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 84; Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation to John* (The New Testament in Context; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1998), 194; J. D. Charles, “Apocalyptic Tribute,” 468; Law, “In the Light of the Lamb 29-30. Hillyer combines these with the shepherd imagery (“The Lamb,” 230). For a combination of the Passover/servant and the warrior imagery, see G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 256; Beale, *Revelation*, 351; and id., *Use of Daniel*, 209-

connected with lambs in the Old Testament, it seems likely that he would have been aware of the possible evocations of this imagery in his depiction of Jesus. By using the term ἄρνιον, John is able to allow for these various connotations without tying the imagery to one particular text. It appears most probable, however, that John alludes to passages from the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish writings which connect the image of a lamb to themes of sacrifice and vulnerability.

John's use of this theme, however, moves beyond these depictions within the Old Testament. Throughout Revelation, the Lamb is associated with other significant images and motifs. The Lamb, although slain (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8), is also victorious (5:6; 17:14). The Lamb which is seen by John is announced as the "lion of the tribe of Judah" and the "root of David" (5:5). It also serves as an image which John uses to associate Jesus with the heavenly throne (22:3; cf. 5:6; 7:9), and is depicted, somewhat surprisingly, as a shepherd (7:17) and source of light (21:23) to God's people. The association of the image of the Lamb with these other themes moves beyond its usage in the Old Testament and suggests a greater complexity in John's understanding of Jesus as the Lamb. Although these associations may create some tension, the resulting picture is nevertheless coherent and unique to John.⁵³

Throne Imagery

One of the frequently occurring themes alongside the imagery of the Lamb is the association of Jesus with the heavenly throne.⁵⁴ This particular theme comes to expression in a variety of ways and features prominently within the narrative. In this section we will first survey the employment of the motif in Revelation before

210; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 26; Gieschen, "The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine throne," 237. R. H. Charles (*Revelation*, 1.141-143), Morton (*One Upon the Throne*, 158-160), and Witherington (*Revelation*, 121) argue for a combination of victim and military imagery. Aune summarizes the usage in Revelation as referring to the Lamb either as "leader" or "sacrifice" (*Revelation*, 1.352).

⁵³ Contra Barrett, "The Lamb of God," 28.

⁵⁴ A number of studies have been conducted on the throne imagery in Revelation. See Hengel, "Die Throngemeinschaft," 368-385; Knight, "Enthroned Christ," 43-50; Van Unnik, "Worthy is the Lamb," 455-461; L. W. Hurtado, "Revelation 4-5 in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Analogies," *JSNT* 25 (1985): 105-124; Morton, "Glory to God," 89-109; and id., *One Upon the Throne*; Darrell D. Hannah, "Of Cherubim and the Divine Throne: Rev 5:6 in Context," *NTS* 49 (2003): 528-542; and id., "The Throne of His Glory: The Divine Throne and Heavenly Mediators in Revelation and the Similitudes of Enoch," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 68-96; Lucetta Mowry, "Revelation 4-5 and Early Christian Liturgical Usage," *JBL* 71 (1952): 75-84.

considering the Old Testament passages that may lie behind its use in Revelation. Finally, I will offer an analysis of John's engagement with these Old Testament texts.

The Divine Throne in Revelation

The motif of the throne is used throughout the book of Revelation.⁵⁵ The heavenly throne-room functions both as a place of judgment/authority and as the location where worship takes place in heaven (see 4:1-5:14; 7:9-17; 8:3-5; 11:16-19; 15:5-8; 19:1-8; 20:11-15; 22:1-3).⁵⁶ Most significantly, the throne is associated with God (1:4; 3:21; 4:2 (x2), 3, 4 5, 6 (x3), 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9, 10, 11 (x2), 15; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4, 5; 20:11, 12; 21:3, 5). In a number of texts, the "One seated on the throne" is used as a sufficient way to refer to God (4:2, 3, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5). Within Revelation, the chief expression of this imagery may be found in chapters four and five.⁵⁷ Here, the heavenly throne-room is introduced. In these chapters, a series of concentric circles is described. At the center are the heavenly throne and the "One seated on it" (4:2-3).⁵⁸ Next the throne is surrounded by four living creatures (4:6-8) and then twenty-four elders who are also seated on thrones (4:4 (x2); 11:16).

Within this context, John introduces the Lamb. Initially, the Lamb is said to be in the midst (ἐν μέσῳ) of the throne (5:6; 7:17). Although some have argued that the Lamb should be seen as standing on the throne, it seems best to view the Lamb as approaching the throne at this point in the book.⁵⁹ Later, the theme is developed further as God and the Lamb share the throne (22:1, 3; cf. 3:21; 7:9).⁶⁰ Other lesser

⁵⁵ The associated titles of "king," "Lord," and "Christ" will be considered at a later point in this chapter.

⁵⁶ In company with the throne imagery, the throne-room is depicted as the heavenly temple. So Beale, *Revelation*, 315-316.

⁵⁷ These two chapters should be seen as complementary parts of the same vision. See Hurtado, "Revelation 4-5," 105-124; Boxall, *Revelation*, 93; Morton, *One Upon the Throne*, 68.

⁵⁸ A sea of glass (4:6), a rainbow (4:3), and seven blazing lamps (4:5; cf. 1:4) also appear in the immediate proximity of the throne.

⁵⁹ Hannah argues that the four living creatures function as part of the divine throne, thus placing the Lamb on the throne in Rev 5 (see "Throne of His Glory," 70; and id., "Of Cherubim and the Divine Throne," 528-542). Although it is clear later in Revelation that the Lamb is depicted as sharing this throne, the narrative depicts the Lamb as approaching the "One seated on the throne" (5:7) to receive the scroll. See also Robert Hall, "Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne: Another Look at Revelation 4.6," *NTS* 36 (1990): 609-613; Knight, "Enthroned Christ," 45.

⁶⁰ See Söding, "Gott und Lamm," 110.

thrones exist in heaven (upon which sit the twenty-four elders), but the heavenly throne belonging to God is consistently depicted as a single throne.⁶¹

Christians are also promised certain rewards in connection with the throne of Jesus. In the message to the church at Laodicea, those who overcome are promised the reward of sitting with Jesus on his throne (3:21). The fulfillment of this promise is depicted, at least to some extent, in 20:4, where those who had been killed as a result of their testimony are raised to life, seated on thrones, and given authority to judge. The connection here between these thrones and suffering death as a result of one's testimony helps to qualify and explain the nature of this "overcoming" mentioned in 3:21.

Finally, as noted in the previous chapter, the image of the throne of Satan serves as a contrasting image within the context of the book (2:13; 13:2; 16:10). This throne is given to the beast from the sea and is part of the wider theme contrasting the beast with the Lamb.

Old Testament Background

As we look now to the sources for the imagery used by John in depicting Jesus and the throne in Revelation, the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish writings prove to be significant.⁶² It appears that John has drawn from a variety of texts in crafting the imagery in Revelation.⁶³ Within this section, we will explore possible sources both for the depiction of the throne and for its relationship with the Lamb.

⁶¹ When reference is made to the divine throne in Revelation, the throne is consistently depicted as a single throne. On the notion of the *bisellium*, see below.

⁶² Certain connections with Roman imperial imagery, as noted in the previous chapter, may also be seen. Main details, as will be explored in this section, have been drawn from the Old Testament. So Parker, "Our Lord and God," 228-229. Although there may be some conceptual connections with the later Hekhalot literature and Merkavah mysticism due to the consideration of the Old Testament texts involved, it does not appear that John is drawing from any early forms of this tradition. See Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 12; Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 340-348.

⁶³ It has also been suggested that the imagery in Revelation 4-5 may be drawn from Jewish and Christian liturgical settings. Since the focus in this chapter is upon the relationship of Revelation and key Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish writings, consideration of the potential relationship between the imagery used by John and the liturgical context will not be offered here. Attention will be given to this question in the following chapter.

The Depiction of the Throne

The relationship of the Lamb to the throne is our chief concern in this section, but I will offer a few comments concerning the imagery used by John to depict the heavenly throne.⁶⁴ Although some connections with Roman imperial imagery may be observed, John has drawn his imagery primarily from the Old Testament. With regard to particular texts, the scenes in Ezek 1 and Isa 6 provide the strongest links with the imagery employed by John, particularly as expressed in Rev 4.⁶⁵

As the description of the heavenly throne-room unfolds in Rev 4, John merges elements from the two most significant visions of the heavenly throne found within the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Ezek 1 is rightly seen as a dominant influence for the imagery used by John,⁶⁶ but elements from Isaiah's vision of the throne (Isa 6) may also be observed. Several main features appear to be drawn from Ezek 1. As the scene in Rev 4 begins, the description of the heavens opening (4:1) appears to allude to Ezek 1:1.⁶⁷ As in Ezek 1:5-14, John describes four living creatures that surround the throne (Rev 4:6-8). The depiction in Rev 4:6 of the sea of glass may reflect the expanse above the living creatures (Ezek 1:22).⁶⁸ The rainbow encircling the throne (Rev 4:3) may also allude to the description of the "likeness of the glory of the Lord" in Ezek 1:28.⁶⁹ It does not appear, however, that John has adopted the features of Ezek 1 without alteration.⁷⁰ First, the throne in Revelation appears to be depicted as stationary in the heavenly temple, and, in this way, seems to be influenced by the imagery of Isa 6. Next, the living creatures in Revelation surround the throne rather than carry it.⁷¹ Third, the appearance of these living creatures has been modified. In Ezekiel, each one has four faces;⁷² in Revelation,

⁶⁴ This imagery utilized by John does suggest a relationship with Old Testament throne-room scenes. We will explore in the following section how imagery from other figures associated with the divine throne in the Old Testament is used in the description of Jesus in Revelation. Focus in this section, then, will be primarily upon the relationship between Jesus, God, and the heavenly throne.

⁶⁵ In addition to these texts, visions of the divine throne may also be found in 1 Kgs 22 and Dan 7.

⁶⁶ So Beale, *Revelation*, 315-316; Rowland, "First Chapter of Ezekiel," 56-65.

⁶⁷ Mounce, *Revelation*, 118.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 123.

⁶⁹ Beale, *Revelation*, 321; Rowland, "First Chapter of Ezekiel," 59.

⁷⁰ See Moyise, *Old Testament*, 69-70.

⁷¹ So Morton, "Glory to God," 94.

⁷² These are described as faces of a man, a lion, an eagle, and an ox in Ezek 1:10. Cf. also Ezek 10:14.

each creature has one of the four faces.⁷³ Unlike the living creatures in Ezek 1:6, the living creatures in Rev 4:8 have six wings rather than four, which may reflect the description of the seraphim in Isa 6.⁷⁴ The description of the eyes covering the wings of the living creatures in Rev 4:6 also appears to have been transferred from the description of the wheels in Ezek 1:18, as is the case in Ezek 10:12.⁷⁵ The worship of the four living creatures in Rev 4:8 has also been drawn from Isa 6:3, albeit with some modification.⁷⁶ In these ways, John has combined and modified elements from both Ezek 1 and Isa 6.

Beale has argued that Dan 7 has also played an important role in shaping the overall literary structure of Rev 4-5, and he notes fourteen elements that occur in both Dan 7 and Rev 4-5 in roughly the same order.⁷⁷ Certain features noted by Beale are convincing, such as the overall structure of the scene. The vision in Daniel focuses first upon the vision of the Ancient of Days on the throne and then on the vision of the “one like a son of man” approaching the throne. The structure of Rev 4-5, with the two complementary parts, could be seen to be following this pattern from Dan 7. Specific elements of the vision in Rev 4-5, however, differ from Dan 7 in important ways. First, though both visions feature the opening of books, the significance in the narrative differs. In Daniel, the books are opened before the Ancient of Days prior to the arrival of the “one like a son of man.” In Rev 5, the opening of the book is the central focus of the narrative. Here, it is a direct result of the arrival of the Lamb (5:5; cf. 6:1). Next, the messianic figure, depicted in Rev 5, is described as a “lamb.” John has already demonstrated familiarity with the imagery of Dan 7 in Rev 1, so, the description of a “lamb” here, rather than a human figure,

⁷³ In 4:7, one has the face of a man, and the other three are described as looking like a lion, an ox, and an eagle. It does not appear that the change in order is significant. See Morton, “Glory to God,” 94-95; and id., *One Upon the Throne*, 100-101.

⁷⁴ Morton, “Glory to God,” 95.

⁷⁵ Beale, *Revelation*, 328-331.

⁷⁶ John inserts θεός into the first line. The second line has been replaced with ὁ ἦ καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, likely in keeping with themes elsewhere in Revelation (cf. 1:4, 8; 11:17; 16:5).

⁷⁷ Beale suggests the following parallels: “introductory vision phraseology,” “a throne(s) set in heaven,” “God sitting on a throne,” “God’s appearance on the throne,” “fire before the throne,” “heavenly servants surrounding the throne,” “book(s) before the throne,” “the book(s) opened,” “a divine (messianic) figure approaching God’s throne to receive authority to reign forever over a kingdom,” “the kingdom’s scope: ‘all peoples, nations, and tongues,’” “the seer’s emotional distress on account of the vision,” “the seer’s reception of heavenly counsel concerning the vision from one of the heavenly throne servants,” “the saints given divine authority to reign over a kingdom,” and “concluding mention of God’s eternal reign” (*Revelation*, 314-316; see also *Use of Daniel*, 181-228).

may represent a deliberate alteration of the imagery.⁷⁸ Finally, it is not clear that Rev 5 depicts the reception of a kingdom. Although one may posit such a setting for Dan 7, the narrative in Revelation arguably depicts the recognition of pre-existing authority rather than the enthronement of the Lamb.

Within Rev 4, then, John creates a composite image of the divine throne and the heavenly worship using various elements, particularly from Isa 6 and Ezek 1.⁷⁹ The use of the images from these texts suggests that John intends to indicate the continuity of his vision with these Old Testament visions. Although reference to Jesus is not found in Rev 4, this chapter is properly viewed as the first part of the wider scene encompassing both chapters four and five.⁸⁰ Within Rev 5, the introduction of the Lamb, the reception of the scroll, and the resulting worship form key components of this scene. Attention will now be turned to the relationship between the Lamb and the heavenly throne.

The Relationship of the Lamb to the Throne: OT Precedents

Within Revelation, as noted above, Jesus is associated with the divine throne and the “One seated on it” in a variety of texts. Various precedents in the Old Testament may be suggested as possible sources for this connection.

First, some have suggested that this imagery is intended to depict the enthronement of the Lamb.⁸¹ Holtz argues that John bases his imagery upon an ancient Egyptian form of the enthronement ceremony.⁸² This enthronement

⁷⁸ See Gieschen, “The Lamb,” 234-236.

⁷⁹ The source of some elements, such as the twenty-four elders, proves difficult to identify conclusively. Apart from the question as to whether these are intended to be angelic beings or human representatives of the elect, the particular source of the image of twenty-four elders is debated. For those who would opt for explanation from the Old Testament or early Christianity, several options exist. Some have suggested the priestly courses of 1 Chron 24:4-19 (see Farrer, *Revelation*, 89; Knight, *Revelation*, 60; Sweet, *Revelation*, 118; Witherington, *Revelation*, 117; Knight, “Enthroned Christ,” 45). Others have suggested that these represent the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles (see Hughes, *Revelation*, 72; Beale, *Revelation*, 322-326). Beckwith suggests that this could be simply part of a popular tradition (*Apocalypse*, 498). Bietenhard posits that the identification of these beings as “elders” could be due to the imagery of Isa 24:23 (LXX). See Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt*, 58.

⁸⁰ See Hurtado, “Revelation 4-5,” 105-24; contra Christopher Rowland, “The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature,” *JSJ* 10.2 (1979): 145; and id., *Open Heaven* 222-25, 425-26; and id., “First Chapter of Ezekiel”; Barker, “Enthronement and Apotheosis,” 218; Bauckham, *Theology*, 32.

⁸¹ See Holtz, *Christologie*, 27-29; Beale, *Revelation*, 357; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 168.

⁸² Holtz, *Christologie*, 27.

ceremony features three essential stages: exaltation (Erhöhung), presentation (Präsentation), and enthronement (Inthronisation). Beale also argues, on the basis of the sequence of events in Dan 7, that the giving of the book is intended to represent the granting of authority to the Lamb.⁸³ Although the imagery in Rev 5 may resemble certain elements of an enthronement ceremony, the enthronement of the Lamb is not the primary meaning of the scene. Instead, the primary focus of the scene, it appears, is the reception and opening of the scroll (5:1-8).⁸⁴ The book does not appear to function in Revelation as a symbol of royal authority,⁸⁵ and Jesus has been described previously in Revelation as possessing authority (1:5-6; 2:26-27). If the statement in 3:21 may be seen as chronologically prior to the vision of Rev 4-5, the “enthronement” of Jesus may be thought of as having already occurred. Furthermore, it does not seem likely that John, writing in first century C.E. in Asia Minor, would be drawing from an ancient Egyptian form.⁸⁶

A second possible source for this imagery is material drawn from the Psalms. As I will demonstrate at a later point in this chapter, John draws from Ps 2 elsewhere in his depiction of Jesus. For the present discussion, the relationship between the Lord and his anointed in Ps 2 may have served as a potential source of the imagery due to the fact that it describes God’s establishment of his “anointed one” as king. Within the wider context of the New Testament, Ps 110 is also frequently cited in reference to Jesus’ messianic kingship.⁸⁷ Ps 110 depicts the establishment of “my

⁸³ Beale, *Revelation*, 356. Beale is correct in noting that the scene in Daniel depicts the approach of a figure after the opening of a book, but his observation about Rev 5 depicting the same situation does not correspond to the narrative there. The remainder of Rev 5, following the taking of the scroll in verse 7, focuses upon the Lamb’s authority to receive the scroll. The scroll is not opened until verse 1 of chapter 6.

⁸⁴ Van Unnik also notes the contrast with a text such as Phil 2, which depicts an elevation in status. The stress in Rev 5 is upon the already existing worthiness rather than the exaltation to a new status (“Worthy is the Lamb,” 447-448).

⁸⁵ Although the scroll may be seen as symbolizing authority, the narrative places greater emphasis upon the reception of the scroll in Rev 5 (and its opening in Rev 6) rather than a change in status. See Van Unnik, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 445-461 for arguments against the enthronement approach. Aune also suggests that the term “investiture” may be a more appropriate way of describing the scene, as the Lamb is formally recognized for the authority which he already possesses (*Revelation*, 1.336-338).

⁸⁶ So David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 236-237.

⁸⁷ In addition to other references to Jesus being seated at the right hand of God, Ps 110:1 is quoted in Matt 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35, and Heb 1:13. On the use of Ps 110 in the New Testament, see D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973); Martin Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’ The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1,” in *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 119-225; see also Richard Bauckham, “The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus,”

lord” at the right hand of Yahweh.⁸⁸ This imagery is utilized by several New Testament authors to depict the enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God (see Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). The general imagery of Ps 110 and its usage in early Christian traditions may have contributed to the idea of Jesus’ enthronement in the book of Revelation, but enthronement at the right hand of God is not emphasized by John.⁸⁹ In cases where Jesus is associated with the divine throne, the throne is referred to in the singular (3:21; 7:9-11; 17; 22:1, 3),⁹⁰ and this emphasis upon the sharing of the single throne suggests a close relationship between God and the Lamb.⁹¹

Finally, there may be some precedent for the notion of Jesus sharing the throne with God. First, the throne of the king in the Old Testament text could be described as the “throne of the Lord” (see 1 Chr 29:23). This imagery would likely convey the notion of the Davidic king as the representative of God. In the case of Revelation, however, it is the divine throne in heaven that is in view. The vision of Ezek 1, in addition to providing certain aspects of the throne-room vision generally, may have also provided the concept of a divine being sharing the throne with God. Within the closing verses of the chapter, Ezekiel sees a human figure above the throne (Ezek 1:26-28). Elements of the description, as we will see in the following section, appear to be used by John in his description of Jesus in Rev 1:12-20. This glorious figure above the throne is said to be the “likeness of the glory of the

in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-69, esp. 62-64.

⁸⁸ L. Allen notes that though the first few verses may reflect the context of enthronement, the Psalm as a whole may simply be drawing upon this tradition rather than reflecting this context in its entirety (see Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (WBC 21; Waco: Word, 1983), 84-85).

⁸⁹ It may be that John assumes that this enthronement is at the right hand of God. Even if this is so, it is not made explicit in the text. See Hannah, “Throne of His Glory,” 73; contra Comblin, *Le Christ*, 181. Hengel suggests that the use in Revelation presupposes Ps 110 but specifically avoids the imagery of the “right hand” (“Sit at My Right Hand!” 150, 173-174; and id., “Die Throngemeinschaft,” 375).

⁹⁰ So Knight, “Enthroned Christ,” 47.

⁹¹ See Hengel, “Sit at My Right Hand!” 151. Although the idea of Jesus seated at the right hand of God could suggest the notion of two thrones in heaven, the image of a *bisellium* could have provided the means for the employment of this imagery without abandoning a monotheistic viewpoint. On this imagery, see Christoph Markshies, “‘Sessio ad Dexteram’: Bemerkungen zu einem altchristlichen Bekenntnismotiv in der christologischen Diskussion der altkirchlichen Theologen,” in *Le Trône de Dieu* (ed. Marc Philonenko; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1993), 252-317.

Lord.”⁹² Within some Second Temple Jewish writings, there are descriptions of other figures that are human or “human” in appearance and are associated with the heavenly throne.⁹³ Although some precedent may be seen in these texts, the emphasis upon this figure as a “lamb” (5:6; 7:9, 17, 22:1-3) suggests a unique Christian emphasis here.⁹⁴ Moreover, the sharing of the throne and the scenes of worship directed at both Jesus and God together reflect the Christian character of John’s religious convictions regarding the unity of Jesus and God.

Summary

Within Revelation, the heavenly throne-room serves as a key setting for events in the narrative (4-5; 7:9-17; 8:2-5; 11:15-19; 12:5; 15:1-8; 19:1-8; 22:1-3). As noted previously, the throne also becomes a sufficient way of referring to God (4:2, 3, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5), and the heavenly throne functions as an important context in which worship is offered to God and to Jesus (4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-17; 11:15-19; 19:1-8). As the series of visions unfold, some progression may be seen from Rev 5, where the Lamb approaches the throne to receive the scroll, to 22:3, where the imagery reaches its climax in the midst of the new Jerusalem with the throne “of God and of the Lamb” (ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου).

As I have argued in the first part of this section, John draws from passages such as Isa 6, Ezek 1, and Dan 7 in his depiction of the heavenly throne-room in Rev 4-5. The inclusion of details from these texts leads the reader to identify the “One seated on the throne” in Rev 4 with the deity in these Old Testament passages. John’s vision may be seen, then, as a continuation of these prophetic throne-room scenes. John’s use of Isa 6, Ezek 1, and Dan 7, however, demonstrates his literary creativity as he blends together and modifies elements from these texts. The result in Revelation is a scene which is unique to John.

⁹² Zimmerli notes the restraint used in describing this figure in human form (Walther Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (trans. Ronald E. Clements; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), 122). See also Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 104-106.

⁹³ See Ezek. Trag. *Exagoge* 68-72. *1 Enoch* also depicts the “elect one” as sitting on the throne of glory (*1 En.* 45:3; 50:3; 54:5; 60:10; cf. 68:39-40). See Gieschen, “The Lamb,” 228-231. Rowland notes movement away from physical descriptions of God in Jewish texts describing the heavenly throne and increasing interest in exalted figures in this context (Rowland, “Visions of God,” 151-154).

⁹⁴ See Gieschen, “The Lamb,” 234-236.

John demonstrates his own literary artistry not only in his description of the heavenly throne-room in Rev 4 but also by the way that he weaves together this chapter with the one that follows. The second part of this scene in Rev 5, when the Lamb receives the scroll, provides a significant component of John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation. The emphasis in this vision is upon the reception of the scroll (5:9-10) and not upon the enthronement of the Lamb. Although precedent may exist for the association of a human figure with the divine throne,⁹⁵ John more frequently depicts Jesus as the Lamb in scenes associating him with that throne (5:6; 7:9, 17, 22:1-3). This suggests an important relationship between Jesus' authority, as symbolized by his presence on the heavenly throne (3:21; 5:6; 7:9, 17; 22:1, 3), and his sacrificial death, as symbolized by the image of the slain Lamb (5:6, 9, 12; cf. 1:5; 13:8). Other early Christian writings associate Jesus with the heavenly throne,⁹⁶ but Rev 4-5 provides a distinct contribution within the context of early Christianity.

Angelomorphic Imagery and the Glorious "One Like a Son of Man"

The third major type of imagery used of Jesus is located primarily within the opening chapter of Revelation, where Jesus is depicted in exalted terms. In the description in 1:12-20, a number of images are combined to create a portrait of Jesus that bears a resemblance to several texts in the Old Testament. Chief among these images is the description of Jesus as the "One like a son of man" (1:13; cf. 14:14). Exploration of the relationship between John's presentation of Jesus and these Old Testament scriptures is our main concern here.

A number of recent studies on this topic have focused their attention on what may be termed "angelomorphic" Christology in Revelation.⁹⁷ These studies address two separate, though related, questions. First, what is the relationship between the language employed by John to describe Jesus and the language used in descriptions of angels in Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish texts? Second, how should

⁹⁵ See Ezek 1:26-28; Dan 7:13-14; cf. also Ezek. Trag. *Exagoge* 68-72; *1 En.* 45:3; 50:3; 54:5; 60:10.

⁹⁶ See Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22.

⁹⁷ Gieschen's distinction between "angel Christology" ("the explicit identification of Jesus Christ as an angel") and "angelomorphic Christology" ("the identification of Christ with angelic form and functions, whether before or after the incarnation, whether or not he is specifically identified as an angel") is helpful in this regard (*Angelomorphic Christology*, 28). See also Rowland, "A Man Clothed in Linen," 100.

we understand the development of early Christology and its relationship to angel worship? Rowland's work has largely given direction to this first question in the context of studies on Revelation,⁹⁸ and Stuckenbruck and Carrell have likewise addressed this question at length in recent monographs.⁹⁹

In this section we will consider the imagery used of Jesus that some have suggested is "angelomorphic" in nature due to its similarity to imagery used to describe angels in other writings. We will direct attention first to the imagery of the "One like a son of man" in Rev 1. Next, we will consider the scene in Rev 14, which again depicts "one like a son of man." Third, we will examine the imagery related to the armies of heaven, a motif connected with angels. Finally, this section will conclude with an assessment of this imagery in Revelation.¹⁰⁰

Revelation 1

The description of Jesus in 1:12-20 plays an important role in the opening of the book of Revelation by identifying Jesus as the one who discloses divine revelation and introduces the messages to the seven churches.¹⁰¹ The depiction in these verses exhibits features that appear to be drawn from several Old Testament texts, such as Dan 7, Dan 10, and Ezek 1. Due to the use of these passages in descriptions of angels found in other Jewish writings, some have argued that the depiction of Rev 1

⁹⁸ See Rowland, "First Chapter of Ezekiel"; and id., "Vision of the Risen Christ," 1-11.

⁹⁹ Stuckenbruck deals with the question of angel-veneration in Second Temple Judaism in his *Angel Veneration and Christology*. Carrell argues for the employment of angelomorphic Christology in Revelation while still maintaining a monotheistic viewpoint (see *Jesus and the Angels*). In addition to these studies, see Hoffmann, *The Destroyer and the Lamb*; Hannah, *Michael and Christ*; and Gundry, "Angelomorphic Christology," 662-678. On the use of angelomorphic Christology more broadly within early Christianity, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (SBT 2/17; London: SCM, 1970), 26-32; Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (trans. and ed. John A. Baker; vol. 1 of *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicea*; London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1964), 117-146.

¹⁰⁰ Rev 10:1-2 could also be considered, as the "mighty angel" is described using elements used to depict Jesus elsewhere in Revelation, such as the cloud (cf. 1:7; 14:14-16) and a face like the sun (cf. 1:16). Although some have seen this as referring to Jesus (see Gundry, "Angelomorphic Christology," 662-678; Beale, *Revelation*, 522-525; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 256-260), the presence of these features fails to provide sufficient evidence for viewing this figure as referring to Jesus rather than an unnamed "mighty angel." See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.259; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 393; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 126; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 194; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 138; J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1989), 156.

¹⁰¹ See Beale, *Revelation*, 206; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 85; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.117.

portrays Jesus as an angel. The possible sources for this imagery deserve explanation.

The vision of Jesus is introduced in 1:12-13 as John turns to see the voice that was speaking to him¹⁰² and sees “One like a son of man” (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου). As Slater has noted, “One like a son of man” (1:13; 14:14) functions in Revelation more as a descriptive image than as a title as it is found in the gospels.¹⁰³ The use of this phrase emphasizes the human appearance of the figure.¹⁰⁴ Though the phrase “son of man” may be found elsewhere in the Old Testament as an expression used to refer to a human being,¹⁰⁵ most scholars conclude that the use in Revelation is derived from the scene in Dan 7 in which a being appearing “like a son of man” comes with the clouds to the Ancient of Days.¹⁰⁶ Ezek 1:26 may have influenced the imagery in Revelation,¹⁰⁷ but the usage of the expression in Dan 7 seems to be the primary source for this phrase given the presence of other imagery from Daniel within Rev 1:12-20.

Besides the image of the “One like a son of man,” the depiction of the head and hair in Rev 1 has close parallels to Dan 7:9.¹⁰⁸ The phrasing used by John does

¹⁰² J. H. Charlesworth suggests that John is making use of a tradition within Jewish writings that treats the “voice” as a hypostasis (see James H. Charlesworth, “The Jewish Roots of Christology: The Discovery of the Hypostatic Voice,” *SJT* 39 (1986): 19-41). Although he offers an intriguing suggestion, it is more likely a literary device (synecdoche) rather than a reference to an established tradition. See Adela Yarbo Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition and the Book of Revelation,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 552; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 86; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.88. This voice “like a trumpet” (φωνήν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος) may reflect imagery from Exod 19:16, 19.

¹⁰³ Thomas B. Slater, “HOMOION HUION ANTHRŌPOU in Rev 1.13 and 14.14,” *BT* 44 (1993), 349; and id., “More on Revelation 1.13 and 14.14,” *BT* 47 (1996), 147-148; and id., *Christ and Community*, 96-97; see also Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 66; Boxall, *Revelation*, 42; Murphy, *Fallen*, 89; Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 144; R. L. Thomas, “Glorified Christ,” 242; contra Tribble, “Christ of the Apocalypse,” 168.

¹⁰⁴ So Swete, *Apocalypse*, 15; contra R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.27.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Ps 8:4; Ezek 2:1, 3, 8; 3:1.

¹⁰⁶ See Ladd, *Revelation*, 32; Roloff, *Revelation*, 36; Smalley, *Revelation*, 53; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.90 (with Dan 10:16); Swete, *Apocalypse*, 15; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 87. Beale also notes the usage of the expression in Dan 10:16 (Theod.) and Dan 3:25 (Theod.). See Beale, *Daniel*, 159; and id., *Revelation*, 210; Casey, *Son of Man*, 141; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 139-197.

¹⁰⁷ Aune suggests that the linking of the imagery of the “one like a son of man” and the “ancient of days” may have been done upon the basis of Ezek 1:26 and the human figure appearing above the throne (*Revelation*, 1.91).

¹⁰⁸ So Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 155-156; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 438; Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 89; Farrer, *Revelation*, 66; Beale, *Revelation*, 210; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.94-95; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (MNTC; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), 15. The application of this

not exactly match the MT or the LXX, but it appears likely that John has combined the imagery used of both the Ancient of Days and the “One like a son of man” to describe Jesus in this passage. This particular combination is not necessarily unique to John. There is evidence, for example, of the two figures being identified together in two manuscripts of Daniel in the LXX.¹⁰⁹

In addition to the imagery drawn from Dan 7, other features of the description of Jesus in Rev 1 bear a resemblance to the appearance of the heavenly figure in Dan 10. First, the description of the golden belt in Rev 1:13 corresponds to the one worn by the figure in Dan 10:5.¹¹⁰ The eyes and feet in Rev 1:14-15 also resemble those described in Dan 10:6.¹¹¹ Finally, the brilliant appearance of the face of the “One like a son of man” (Rev 1:16) may reflect similar imagery as in Dan 10:6.¹¹²

imagery to Jesus, on its own, does not conclusively indicate that John is depicting Jesus here as divine. This image of white hair could also be used to describe angels (see *Apoc. Ab.* 11:2) and exalted humans (see *1 En.* 106, where it is used of Noah). The wider theological patterns in Revelation that associate Jesus closely with God, however, suggest that this imagery may serve the same purpose here.

¹⁰⁹ This textual evidence is found in mss 88 and 967. Stuckenbruck argues that the image of the “one like a son of man” coming “as” the Ancient of Days represents a theological translation that identifies the two figures so as to avoid the charge of two divine figures in heaven. See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 215-218; and id., “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’ in the Old Greek Recension of Daniel 7,13: Scribal Error or Theological Translation?” *ZNW* 86 (1995): 268-276. B. Reynolds, however, stresses that these should still be seen as distinct figures (Benjamin E. Reynolds, “The ‘One Like a Son of Man’ According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7,13-14,” *Bib* 89.1 (2008): 70-80). See also David E. Aune, “Christian Prophecy and the Messianic Status of Jesus,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 421; J. Lust, “Daniel 7,13 and the Septuagint,” *ETL* 54 (1978): 62-69; Rowland, “Risen Christ,” 2; and id., “First Chapter of Ezekiel,” 97. On this, Hannah counsels caution, as it is possible that the imagery in Revelation could have influenced the reading of Dan 7 reflected in mss 88 and 967 (*Michael and Christ*, 157-158). Rowland also suggests that the separation between the human figure and the throne in Ezek 1 may have influenced the imagery in Daniel (“Risen Christ,” 5). Contra A. Y. Collins, who argues that the author of Revelation likely viewed both the “ancient of days” and the “one like a son of man” as “hypostatic manifestations of God” (“The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 557; and id., *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 184).

¹¹⁰ The usage here in Rev 1:13 is closer to the language used in the MT and in Theod. Rev 1:13 τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσᾶν. Dan 10:5 וְהָיָה חֵטְמוֹ כְּחֵטְמוֹ אֱלֹהִים (MT); τὴν ὀσφὺν περιεζωσμένος βυσσίνῳ (LXX). καὶ ἡ ὀσφὺς αὐτοῦ περιεζωσμένη ἐν χρυσίῳ Ὡφας (Theod.). See A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 173. Ford notes, as in the case of 1 Macc 10:89 and 14:44, that the golden belt could indicate royalty (*Revelation*, 385).

¹¹¹ For the eyes, John does differ somewhat from the LXX here, as Dan 10:6 (LXX) describes the eyes as λαμπάδες πυρός. For the feet (1:15), Ezek 1:7 may also be in view. The term used in Rev 1:15 (χαλκολίβανον) has caused some difficulty, as it occurs only in Rev 1:15 and 2:28. It seems likely that the term refers to some sort of brilliant metal. See BDAG, 1076; Hemer, *Letters*, 111-117.

¹¹² In this case, however, the imagery more closely corresponds to that of Judg 5:31 (LXX B). The brilliant gleam of the face of the figure in Dan 10:6 is likely also in view. See Beale, *Revelation*, 212; and id., *Use of Daniel*, 163.

Dan 7 and 10 served as important sources for the imagery in Rev 1, but John has also adapted certain features from Ezekiel. First, the description of the voice as the “sound of many waters” (Rev 1:15) appears to draw from the descriptions of the voice of the God of Israel (Ezek 1:24; 43:2) and the sound of the wings of the living creatures (Ezek 1:24).¹¹³ Next, the description of the long garment worn by Jesus (Rev 1:13) may be adopted from the depiction of the man in Ezek 9.¹¹⁴ This long garment may also reflect priestly attire.¹¹⁵ Third, as already noted, Ezek 1:7 may be the source for the depiction of the feet like bronze (Rev 1:15).¹¹⁶

Elements of John’s description of Jesus may reflect Old Testament passages other than these two sources:

The sword proceeding from Jesus’ mouth (1:16 ῥομφαία δίστομος ὀξεῖα) appears to come from Isa 49:2 LXX, which describes the Lord making the mouth of the servant like a sharp sword (μάχαιραν ὀξεῖαν).¹¹⁷ Isa 11:4 (πατάξει γῆν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ) does not exhibit a strong verbal link here, but it may also lie behind the imagery later used in Rev 2:12 and 19:15.

Second, the description of Jesus as the “living one” (1:18) echoes a number of Old Testament scriptures and Second Temple Jewish writings that refer to God in this manner.¹¹⁸ In 1:18 this is elaborated as Jesus is the one who “was dead” (ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς) and “is alive forever and ever” (ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). Although the title “living one” is interpreted here with respect to the death and resurrection of Jesus, John probably intends this title to have divine

¹¹³ See A. Y. Collins, “The ‘Son of Man,’ Tradition,” 549; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 75; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 80-81.

¹¹⁴ So R. L. Thomas, “Glorified Christ,” 243.

¹¹⁵ See Exod 28:4, 31; 29:5; 35:9. So Mounce, *Revelation*, 58; George Bradford Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (2d ed.; BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1984), 25; Knight, *Revelation*, 39; Smalley, *Revelation*, 54; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 80; Tribble, “The Christ of the Apocalypse,” 170. Ladd suggests that the image of the belt and long robe could also reflect the garb worn by a prophet (*Revelation*, 32-33).

¹¹⁶ John differs somewhat from the LXX here as well, as Ezek 1:7 LXX reads ὥς ἑξαστράπτων χαλκός. So Caird, *Revelation*, 25.

¹¹⁷ So Beale, *Revelation*, 211-212.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:36; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Hos 2:1; cf. Deut 32:40; Dan 4:34 (Theod); 12:7; Sir 18:1.

overtones in light of its usage in the Old Testament and elsewhere in Revelation (4.9f; 10:6).¹¹⁹

A third concept, the phrase “the keys of death and Hades” (1:18), likely communicating authority over death and the grave, has a slightly more ambiguous conceptual background. John may draw from Isa 22:22, where Eliakim is given the key to the house of David, but this link is far from sure.¹²⁰ John likely alludes to Isa 22:22 in Rev 3:7, but the reference merely to “keys” in 1:18 is insufficient evidence to confirm an allusion to the passage here. Job 38:17 provides a more probable source for this imagery, as it refers to God’s knowledge of the “gates of Hades” (πυλωροὶ ᾗδου).¹²¹ Similar imagery can be found in other apocalyptic texts, such as *Apoc. Ab.* 10:11 and *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:15.¹²²

Unifying motifs have been proposed to explain the variety of images in Rev 1. For some, the images used in 1:12-20, such as the robe and walking amongst the lamps, depict Jesus in a priestly fashion.¹²³ Other elements, such as the head and hair, are described in a similar manner to the Ancient of Days in Dan 7, suggesting that John is intending to depict Jesus as a divine figure in this opening chapter.¹²⁴ For others, such as Gieschen and Gundry, in light of descriptions of angelic beings elsewhere, the depiction of Jesus in Rev 1 is illustrative of the application of angelomorphic imagery to Jesus. Features such as the description of the golden belt (1:13), the eyes and feet (1:14-15), and the brilliant appearance of the face (1:16) are drawn from the depiction of what appears to be an angelic being in Dan 10,¹²⁵ and

¹¹⁹ Beale, *Revelation*, 214; Farrer, *Revelation*, 69; Hofius, “Das Zeugnis,” 516.

¹²⁰ See Beale, *Revelation*, 215.

¹²¹ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 20.

¹²² See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 220. In these texts, the angels Iael (*Apoc. Abr.*) and Eremiel (*Apoc. Zeph.*) are the ones who either possess the authority or have received an order concerning Hades. In addition to possible connections with Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish imagery, Aune suggests that this imagery may relate to certain elements in the wider Greco-Roman culture, such as imagery associated with Hekate. See David E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 484-489.

¹²³ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.11; see Boxall, *Revelation*, 42; Witherington, *Revelation*, 81; Diop, “Jesus Christ,” 45; Eduard Lohse, “Der Menschensohn in der Johannesapokalypse,” in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: Für Anton Vögtle* (ed. Rudolf Pesch and Rudolf Schnackenburg; Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 417; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 97-98. For arguments to the contrary, see Murphy, *Fallen*, 90.

¹²⁴ So Beale, *Revelation*, 209-210; Witherington, *Revelation*, 81.

¹²⁵ J. Collins notes that the figure may refer to Gabriel, but the identification is not definite (John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 373). See

the application of these features to angelic beings in other Jewish writings is cited as further support.¹²⁶

Several comments may be offered in response to the above assessments. First, the use of priestly imagery is plausible, given the feature of the “long robe” (1:13) combined with the possible application of priestly imagery later in 19:12.¹²⁷ It does not appear that this is a major motif in Revelation, however, as there are no extended descriptions of Jesus performing priestly duties.¹²⁸ The employment of features used to describe the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:9 in the description of Jesus is suggestive of divine overtones, but these features, on their own, do not serve to identify Jesus as the Ancient of Days.¹²⁹ As for the use of features from Dan 10, one need not conclude that John has adopted these features because of their association with angels. The figure in Dan 10 serves the role of disclosing divine revelation concerning God’s plan for his people, and the application of this imagery to Jesus may reflect functional concerns rather than make a statement about ontological identity.¹³⁰ This may serve the purpose of validating the prophetic message of John and identifying the messages to the seven churches that follow as divine in origin.¹³¹

Revelation 14

Within Rev 14:6-12 John describes a sequence involving three angels who make proclamations. Following the announcements of these three angels, verse fourteen gives the introduction of “One like a son of man” who harvests the earth with a sickle at the instruction of an angel coming out from the temple. Although some have seen verse fourteen as referring to an angel,¹³² it is best to conclude that Jesus is

also A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 175. Rowland notes, however, that the imagery used appears to set this particular figure apart from other angelic beings (“Risen Christ,” 4).

¹²⁶ See *Apoc. Ab.* 11; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:11-13; *2 En.* 1:5; *3 En.* 35:2; *Jos. Asen.* 14:9. See Beale, *Revelation*, 210. *1 En.* 106.2-5 also exhibits similar features in its description of Noah.

¹²⁷ On this, see below on 19:11-16.

¹²⁸ In Revelation, the predominant image appears to be of Jesus receiving priestly service from redeemed humans (1:6; 5:10; 20:6) and from angels (8:3-5; 15:5-8).

¹²⁹ As I will discuss in chapter five, other significant themes serve to identify Jesus with God in Revelation.

¹³⁰ See A. Y. Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 548.

¹³¹ So Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 317.

¹³² See Morris, *Revelation*, 184; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 276-277, 285; Aune, *Revelation*, 2.841; Casey, *Son of Man*, 148-149.

depicted here.¹³³ Prior references to Jesus as “One like a son of man” (1:13) and “coming on the clouds” (1:7) would naturally lead the reader to identify this figure as Jesus.

If this figure in Rev 14 is indeed Jesus, then two issues remain: the command of the angel from the temple and the relationship of Jesus to the sequence of angels. As to the command of the angel from the temple, it does not appear necessary to conclude that Jesus is depicted here as subservient to the angel. Rather, given that the angel proceeds from the heavenly temple, it is probable that this angel is conveying instruction from the “One seated on the throne.”¹³⁴ The relationship of Jesus to the sequence of angels, however, is more problematic. Although interpreting Jesus as the fourth in a series of seven “angelic” figures would create another list of seven - a number for which John shows preference elsewhere in the book of Revelation¹³⁵ - there is a natural break in the narrative between the proclamations of a group of three angels and the harvest of the earth,¹³⁶ suggesting that the sequence may not be especially significant here. The harvest of the earth, likewise, may be seen as two separate, though related, harvests.¹³⁷ It is not necessary to conclude, based upon the sequence of angels, that John thereby intends to represent Jesus as such in 14:14.¹³⁸

Armies of Heaven

Due to its association with angels, we must consider one final image at this juncture: namely, the depiction of Jesus in the role of leading the armies of heaven (19:14). Within Revelation, the leadership of the armies of heaven is also connected with the

¹³³ So Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 662; Boxall, *Revelation*, 212; Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 257; Farrer, *Revelation*, 166; Sweet, *Revelation*, 231; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 153. The imagery of being seated on the clouds likely reflects a combination of imagery from Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1. See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 251.

¹³⁴ This functions, therefore, more as a narrative device than a statement on the relationship between Jesus and the angels. So Beale, *Revelation*, 772; Smalley, *Revelation*, 372.

¹³⁵ I.e. seven churches, trumpets, seals, bowls. On John’s use of numbers, see Bauckham, *Climax*, 29-37; Beale, *Revelation*, 58-64.

¹³⁶ The comment in verse 13 and the καὶ εἶδον of verse 14 help to divide the narrative.

¹³⁷ So G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 552; Bauckham, *Theology*, 94-98; contra Beale, *Revelation*, 773-776.

¹³⁸ So Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 257; Farrer, *Revelation*, 166; Murphy, *Fallen*, 326-327.

angel Michael (12:7).¹³⁹ Aune suggests that after encountering the reference to Michael in 12:7 one would initially assume that this angelic being is in view in Rev 19.¹⁴⁰ This imagery in 19:14 could then be seen as drawing upon traditions from the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism in which angels were depicted as leading the armies of heaven.¹⁴¹

Although this motif can be linked with the angels, God himself can act as the leader of the armies of heaven.¹⁴² Additionally, the notion of Jesus commanding the angelic host may be found elsewhere in early Christian writings.¹⁴³ It is clear in 12:7 that Michael is leading a group of angels, but not all commentators agree that the angelic host alone follow after Jesus in 19:14.¹⁴⁴ If angelic armies are in view in both texts,¹⁴⁵ the relationship between Michael and Jesus may reflect the relationship between the “one like a son of man” and Michael in Dan 10.¹⁴⁶ In addition, Gundry points out the relationship between the celebration of the authority of Christ and the victory of Michael in 12:10.¹⁴⁷ There may be a link, then, between Michael and the angelic host in Rev 12, but there is no reason to conclude that Jesus’ leadership of the armies of heaven serves to portray him in angelic form in Rev 19.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁹ Hannah has addressed the possible relationship between imagery used of Michael and early Christology in his *Michael and Christ*. On this theme of Michael as commander of the heavenly army, see Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, 38-40. He notes examples from Dan 10:13, 20-21; 12:1; 3 Bar. 11:4, 6, 7, 8 (Gk. recension); 2 En. 22:6 (LR); 33:10 (LR). 1QM 17.6-8a also depicts Michael as exalted in authority.

¹⁴⁰ The characteristics that follow, however, would serve to then identify this figure as Jesus (Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1053).

¹⁴¹ See Josh 5:13; 2 En. 33:10; *T. Ab.* 19; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra.* 4.24. See Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 207.

¹⁴² See 1 Sam 17:45; Ps 68; Isa 21:10; 31:4; 37:16; Joel 2:11; Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:27 (MT); 6:14 (MT); Zech 14:5. See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1059; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 207-208.

¹⁴³ See Matt 13:40-42; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7; Jude 14-15. See Beale, *Revelation*, 960.

¹⁴⁴ For arguments to this effect, see Beale, *Revelation*, 960-961; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.135; Caird, *Revelation*, 244. Aune views this reference as ambiguous (*Revelation*, 3.1059).

¹⁴⁵ So Morris, *Revelation*, 231; see also Swete, *Apocalypse*, 253; Ladd, *Revelation*, 255; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 281. For imagery of angelic armies, see *T. Levi* 3:3; *Apoc. El.* 3:4; *1 En.* 102:1-3; *2 En.* 17.

¹⁴⁶ On this, see Beale, *Revelation*, 651-653.

¹⁴⁷ Gundry, “Angelomorphic Christology,” 663. Hannah notes that the victory of Michael is depicted as dependent upon the victory of Christ, thus avoiding any rivalry between the two (*Michael and Christ*, 128). The victory of Christ in Rev 19-20 is also seen as the final victory.

¹⁴⁸ So Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 209.

Analysis and Summary

In light of the above discussion, we may now return to the larger question of whether John has utilized angelomorphic imagery as a way of portraying Jesus in Revelation. Some aspects of John's description of Jesus, as we have seen, do resemble depictions of angels elsewhere. Several arguments may be advanced, however, against the characterization of John's depiction of Jesus as "angelomorphic" in nature.

First, as already noted, the depiction of Jesus in Rev 1, is a composite of several different sources, such as the human-like figure from Ezek 1, the "one like a son of man" in Dan 7, the "Ancient of Days" of Dan 7, the figure of Dan 10, and, possibly, priestly imagery found elsewhere in the Old Testament. The use of imagery from these various sources suggests that John does not identify the figure in Rev 1 with one particular figure from these Old Testament writings.¹⁴⁹ In addition, the characteristics, though drawn from these texts, are not copied exactly.¹⁵⁰ There is sufficient evidence to indicate that John was drawing from these passages, but the variations suggest that John is adapting these images for his own use.¹⁵¹ Certain features, such as those drawn from Dan 10, could be used to depict angelic beings, but it does not appear that John has used them in Rev 1 in order to identify Jesus as an angelic being. It is also significant to note that those characteristics from Rev 1 that are repeated in Rev 2-3 are not used elsewhere of angels in Revelation.¹⁵²

To build upon this first point, then, it is fair to ask whether the use of similar imagery to depict angels and Jesus is a result of intending to depict Jesus in the form of an angel or to portray him simply as a heavenly being.¹⁵³ This imagery may

¹⁴⁹ Witherington notes, "It is, of course, the language of analogy. Jesus is being identified with this human and yet more-than-human figure, who is seen in Daniel as a representative of God's people to God, and of God to God's people. While in Daniel the son of man is distinguished from the Ancient of Days, here the son of man is described as if he were the Ancient of Days" (*Revelation*, 81). See also Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, 152.

¹⁵⁰ So Hannah, *Michael and Christ*, 152.

¹⁵¹ Carrell argues that the text from Dan 10 has provided the "*means*" of interpretation, not the "*object*" of interpretation (*Jesus and the Angels*, 170, italics his).

¹⁵² Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 238. Certain other characteristics from Rev 1 are reflected elsewhere in Revelation, such as the golden belts (cf. 15:6), the sound of many waters (cf. 14:2; 19:6-8), and a brilliant countenance (cf. 10:1), but these do not appear in Rev 2-3.

¹⁵³ Hannah raises several key methodological issues with the identification of the imagery in Rev 1:12-20 as clearly angelic (*Michael and Christ*, 152-154). Dunn likewise suggests, "...may it not be that the similarity of language betokens nothing more than a common dependence on a limited number of traditional formulae or hallowed phrases used in the literary description of such visions, 'a cliché-like description of a heavenly being'?" (*Christology*, xxv; and id., *Partings of the Ways*:

instead serve the purpose of denoting Jesus' function or status rather than suggesting anything about his ontological nature. In this way, connections with other traditions used to describe divine agents, particularly in roles disclosing divine revelation or providing guidance, may be observed.¹⁵⁴ The glorious depiction of Jesus in 1:12-20 then would be well suited to introduce contents of Rev 2-3 and validate John's prophetic message.¹⁵⁵ The transfer of certain functions carried out by angels to Jesus, however, does not necessitate an identification of him as an angel.

Further, Revelation indicates, in a number of texts, a distinction between Jesus and the angels. This is expressed chiefly, perhaps, in the two prohibitions against worshipping angels (19:10; 22:8-9).¹⁵⁶ It appears that John, in employing the motif of an angelic refusal of worship, is demonstrating an awareness of its use elsewhere in Second Temple Judaism.¹⁵⁷ In light of the importance of worship in Revelation (5:1-14; 7:1-12; 9:20; 11:15-19; 14:9, 11; 15:1-8; 16:2; 19:1-8, 20; 20:4), both the association of Jesus with God in worship (see 5:13; 7:10) and these prohibitions against the worship of angels (19:10; 22:8-9) suggest that John draws a sharp distinction between Jesus and the angels.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the motif is absent

Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity (2d ed.; London: SCM Press, 2006), 218). See also Bauckham, "Throne of God," 51; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 236; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 61. *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:11-5 provides an interesting example. In this text, the angel Eremiel appears with a glorious form that reflects elements from the depiction in Dan 10. The angel is mistakenly thought to be God, and the misunderstanding is quickly corrected. Such an exchange suggests that these sorts of features were not immediately identifiable as clearly angelic.

¹⁵⁴ See Dan 10:14; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:11-13; 2 *En.* 1:5; *Jos. Asen.* 14:9. A. Y. Collins notes certain traditions that link an angelic figure (typically Michael) with the manifestation of the kingdom or the judgment of God (see *T. Mos.* 10; 1QM 17.7-8; 11Q13). She argues that the author of Revelation was familiar with traditions that interpret the figure in Dan 7:13 as an angel ("The 'Son of Man' Tradition," 550-551). Within the immediate context in Rev 1-3, the description of the "one like a son of man" serves to introduce the messages to the seven churches. Stuckenbruck concludes that the use of "angelomorphic" language was possibly a motif connected with the visionary experiences of prophets and thus finds expression here. He also notes the difficulty of reconciling the distinctions between Jesus and the angels in Revelation and the use of "angelomorphic" language ("An Angelic Refusal," 695). This tension, however, can be resolved more easily if it is not assumed that John intends to depict Jesus as an angel.

¹⁵⁵ See Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 52, 77; Beale, *Revelation*, 224; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 156-157.

¹⁵⁶ The repetition likely indicates the significance of this motif rather than differing sources. Contra R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.128-129; Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1186; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 742. So Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 249-256; Bauckham, *Climax*, 133.

¹⁵⁷ Bauckham stresses this point in his "Worship of Jesus," 322-41; and id., *Climax*, 118-149. Stuckenbruck has also considered this motif (see Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*; and id., "An Angelic Refusal of Worship," 679-696). This theme may be found in varying forms in texts such as *Apoc. Ab.* 11:1-5 (cf. 17:1-2); *Lad. Jac.* 3; *Jos. Asen.* 14:11-12 (LR); 15:11-12 (LR); Tob 12:16-22; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:11-15; *Ascen. Isa.* 7:18-23; 8:1-10, 15; 2 *En.* 1:4-8; 3 *En.* 1:7.

¹⁵⁸ So Bauckham, *Climax*, 133-140.

in the description of Jesus in the first chapter, where John also falls before the feet of Jesus (1:17-18). John is told not to fear (μὴ φοβοῦ), but no prohibition against worshipping Jesus is given.¹⁵⁹ The angels, further, are depicted as participating in the worship of the Lamb and the “One seated on the throne” (5:11-12),¹⁶⁰ and the angelic messenger who conveyed the message to John is likewise depicted as a servant of Jesus (1:1; 22:16; cf. 1:16, 20).

Finally, imagery that could be considered “angelomorphic” is not employed in contexts dealing with worship or the divine throne. In those contexts, other means are employed by John to depict the relationship of Jesus with God. The “Lamb” is the image more commonly used in scenes where Jesus is linked with the divine throne (5:1-14; 7:9, 17; 22:1, 3), and hymns of worship directed toward Jesus address him as the Lamb (5:13; 7:10). It appears, then, that John does not employ angelomorphic language as a way of validating the association of Jesus with God in worship.

In light of these factors, it does not appear that John utilizes what has been termed “angelomorphic Christology.” He may be seen as drawing from traditions of a heavenly being disclosing the contents of divine revelation, but wider considerations within Revelation, such as the prohibitions against the worship of angels (19:10; 22:8-9) and the association of Jesus with God in contexts of worship (4:1-5:14; 7:9-15), suggest that John is making a clear distinction between Jesus and the angels. In his depiction of Jesus in the texts from Revelation noted above, John draws from a variety of writings from the Old Testament and the Second Temple Jewish period which depict both God and angels. The various descriptive phrases used in 1:12-20 indicate Jesus’ heavenly origin and his status as a divine agent. Beyond this, Jesus is associated with God as a recipient of divine worship, and the boundary between Jesus and the angels is maintained.

The Rider on the White Horse

The description of Jesus in Rev 19 forms the final major component of John’s presentation of Jesus in Revelation. Within this chapter, the overall portrait that

¹⁵⁹ See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, 257-261.

¹⁶⁰ The great multitudes and the twenty-four elders, if seen as representing and/or including angels, would provide further examples (see 5:9-10, 13-14).

emerges is one of a military victor riding on a white horse (19:11), judging and making war with justice (19:11), leading the armies of heaven, who are dressed in fine white, clean linen (19:14), and defeating the enemies of the people of God (19:20-21). The use of military imagery may serve to counter ideology associated with the emperor, but there are also links with certain Old Testament motifs and passages.¹⁶¹ In these texts, God is depicted as a victorious warrior who fights on behalf of his people. Though angels can be viewed as leading the armies of God (12:7),¹⁶² God himself can likewise be seen as leading the host of heaven.¹⁶³ The general imagery of Jesus as the rider on the white horse may be drawn from texts such as 2 Macc 3:25 and Zech 9:9-10,¹⁶⁴ and Rev 19 may also reflect general Jewish expectations of a conquering messiah.¹⁶⁵ The imagery of Jesus riding on a horse as a symbol of the *parousia*, as Aune notes, is quite unique.¹⁶⁶

The short, descriptive phrases in Rev 19 warrant further examination as well for a number of discernable ties to Old Testament texts. We will now consider the descriptive phrases in verses 11-16 in the order in which they appear.¹⁶⁷

First, the phrase “faithful and true” (πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός) has several potential sources. The two adjectives are both used of God in 3 Macc. 2:11.¹⁶⁸ Here,

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Exod 15; Deut 20:1; Ps 18; Is 42:13; Jer 20:11. For a consideration of New Testament usage of this motif, see Tremper Longman, III, “The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif,” *WTJ* 44 (1982): 290-307; see also Slater, *Christ and Community*, 210-211.

¹⁶² Cf. Josh 5:15; Dan 10:13.

¹⁶³ See, for example, Ps 46:8; Isa 1:24; 13:4. See Longman, “Divine Warrior,” 298.

¹⁶⁴ Beale, *Revelation*, 951; Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 204-205. Aune also notes later developments in Jewish writings after the time of the composition of Revelation (*Revelation*, 3.1049-1050).

¹⁶⁵ See 2 Bar. 39:7-40:2; 72:2; 4 Ezra 13:37-38, 49; T. Jud. 24; Ps. Sol. 17:21-27. See Mounce, *Revelation*, 351; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 730-731.

¹⁶⁶ Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1053. Some have suggested that the imagery of Jesus in Rev 19 should be related to that of the first rider on a white horse in Rev 6 (see Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.21.3; Loenertz, *Apocalypse*, 128; S. J. Considine, “The Rider on the White Horse: Apocalypse 6:1-8,” *CBQ* 6 (1944): 421). Although some similarity may be seen in the depiction of the horse, insufficient evidence is given in the text that indicates that the two should be equated (so M. Rissi, “Rider on the White Horse: A Study of Revelation 6.1-2,” *Int* 18 (1964): 415-416; Beale, *Revelation*, 375-376; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 250. Smalley views the rider in 6:2 as a parody of Rev 19 (*Revelation*, 488). See also Boxall, *Revelation*, 107; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 113-114; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 175; and André Feuillet, “Le Premier Cavalier de l’Apocalypse,” *ZNW* 5 (1966): 229-259.

¹⁶⁷ There are two notable portions that will not receive attention here. The phrase βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κύριων will be considered separately at a later juncture in the present chapter, and discussion of the imagery of the armies of heaven has been offered previously in this chapter.

¹⁶⁸ See Beale, *Revelation*, 951.

Simon appeals to the character of God in remaining faithful and true to his word. It is also possible that the phrase is an allusion to Isa 65:16, where God is described as the “true God” (τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἀληθινόν).¹⁶⁹ Elsewhere in Revelation, Jesus is the “faithful and true” witness (3:14), and the words given to John are “faithful and true” as well (21:5; 22:6).

Second, the description of Jesus as “judging and making war in justice” (19:11)¹⁷⁰ draws upon language used in a handful of texts from the Psalms which speak of God’s righteousness in judgment.¹⁷¹ This may also be an allusion to Isa 11:4, where the “branch” from Jesse will judge with righteousness.¹⁷² The motif of “judging and making war in justice” likely reflects the notion of God both acting in judgment upon the enemies of God for their unrighteousness and acting in vindication of God’s people as an expression of his righteousness.¹⁷³

Next, the description of Jesus’ eyes is taken from Dan 10:6.¹⁷⁴ John describes Jesus’ eyes as “flames of fire” (φλὸξ πυρός), while Dan 10:6 LXX uses the phrase “lamps of fire” (λαμπάδες πυρός). The difference between Revelation and Daniel here is relatively minor, and the expression in Rev 19:12 is consistent with the descriptions found earlier in Rev 1:14 and 2:18.

Fourth, the imagery of Jesus wearing many crowns (19:12) is likely intended to contrast with the imagery used of the dragon and the beast from the sea (12:3; 13:1).¹⁷⁵ The term δικάδημα is used in these three texts, which indicates that this contrast is intended by John.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 297-305.

¹⁷⁰ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ.

¹⁷¹ See Ps 9:4 (LXX 9:5 ὁ κρίνων δικαιοσύνην), 9:8 (LXX 9:9 καὶ αὐτὸς κρίνει τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ); 96:13 (LXX 95:13: κρίνει τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ); 98:9 (LXX 97:9 κρίνει τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ). Ps 72:2 (LXX 71:2 κρίνειν τὸν λαόν σου ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ) speaks of the righteousness and justice of the king as (ideally) an extension of the righteousness and justice of God.

¹⁷² Although the LXX here uses ταπεινός to describe the manner in which he judges, the same phrase כְּתִיבִי is used in Isa 11:4 as in Ps 9:9; 72:2; 96:13; 98:9. So Swete, *Apocalypse*, 250; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 680.

¹⁷³ See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1053; Holtz, *Christologie*, 170.

¹⁷⁴ So G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 680.

¹⁷⁵ So Koester, *Revelation*, 175-176; Rissi, *Future*, 23; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 251.

¹⁷⁶ The term στέφανος, however, is used elsewhere in Revelation for other crowns (2:10; 3:11; 14:14).

Fifth, the source for the description of Jesus as possessing the name which no one knows (19:12) is somewhat unclear. It may derive from Isa 62:2-3, although the reference there is to the new name by which the people of God will be called.¹⁷⁷ Some have taken this as simply indicating that a new name will be used for Jesus in the *eschaton*.¹⁷⁸ Swete proposes that it may reflect the story of the angel who appeared to Jacob (Gen 32:29) and the response of the angel to Manoah (Judg 13:18).¹⁷⁹ Others have suggested that it may allude to traditions of “hiding” a name in order to prevent others from having power over an individual.¹⁸⁰ Aune situates the notion of a “secret name” within the wider cultural setting, where speculation about hidden names of deities may be found in magical contexts and discussions about the gods.¹⁸¹ Finally, Beale argues that this could be understood as having the tetragrammaton written upon him, as in *Ascen. Isa.* 9:5.¹⁸² The connection with the crown could be seen as supporting this interpretation, as the high priest wore the divine name on his forehead.¹⁸³ In this case, it is difficult to determine the source of this imagery conclusively, but Beale’s proposal is attractive due to the placement of the name.

¹⁷⁷ So Beale, *Revelation*, 953.

¹⁷⁸ See Heinrich Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT 16a; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1974), 249; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 682.

¹⁷⁹ Swete, *Apocalypse*, 251. Swete goes on to argue that this statement reflects the notion that only Jesus knows “the mystery of His own Being” (252).

¹⁸⁰ R. H. Charles, though viewing this as a gloss, proposes that this notion arose from magical practices and Gnostic thinking (*Revelation*, 2.133). Kiddle viewed this as keeping hidden the full nature of Jesus’ power (*Revelation*, 385).

¹⁸¹ See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1055-1057. He also notes the examples of Gen 32:29 and Judg 13:17-18. The possession of a secret name would then reflect a high Christology, as it serves to identify the rider as a heavenly being (3.1055).

¹⁸² See Beale, *Revelation*, 954; see also Smalley, *Revelation*, 490. Hannah suggests that this may have connections with the “angel of the name” (*Michael and Christ*, 144-145). In addition to identifying this name as God’s name, Slater proposes that the usage here may function in similar fashion to the so-called “messianic secret” in Mark (*Christ and Community*, 215-216).

¹⁸³ Exod 39:27-31. See Farrer, *Revelation*, 198; Beale, *Revelation*, 954; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 681-682. If this image is intended, it would also serve to contrast with the blasphemous names written on the beast (13:1; cf. 17:3) and the name written on the forehead of the harlot (17:5). See Beale, *Revelation*, 955. Gieschen associates this with the link between the Divine Name and the “Angel of the Lord” in Exod 23:21 (*Angelomorphic*, 253). While a reference to the Divine Name is probable here in Revelation, there does not appear to be enough evidence to link the imagery here with the “Angel of the Lord” in that passage. Gieschen also suggests, building upon the work of Daniélou, that this statement may reflect the association of the Name with Christian baptism (*Angelomorphic*, 254; see Daniélou, *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, 154-157).

Next, the description of Jesus' robe being dipped in blood (19:13) has elicited a fair amount of discussion. Three main interpretations have been put forward as to the origin of the blood itself. First, some view this as referring to Jesus' own blood.¹⁸⁴ Others believe that this phrase refers to the blood of Jesus' enemies.¹⁸⁵ As a third option, the blood could be understood as that of the Christians who have been killed in their struggle against the beast (6:10; 13:15; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4).¹⁸⁶ In terms of the source of the image, the robe dipped in blood is likely drawn from Isa 63,¹⁸⁷ a passage that has also influenced the description of the trampling of the winepresses (19:15). Although the context is that of judgment on the enemies of the people of God, it is still possible to understand the image as employed by John to be modified in light of Jesus' death on the cross.¹⁸⁸

Seventh, the title "word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ), though not a major image for Jesus in Revelation, is designated as the name of the rider on the white horse in 19:13. Some have suggested connections with the occurrences in the Gospel of John and 1 John,¹⁸⁹ but the usage in Revelation bears closer similarity to the imagery in Wis 18:14-16.¹⁹⁰ This passage describes the "word of God" leaping forth

¹⁸⁴ This would connect with the images used elsewhere in Revelation to depict Jesus' death (see 1:5, 7; 5:6, 9, 12; 11:8; 13:8). See Boxall, *Revelation*, 274; Corsini, *Apocalypse*, 352; Harrington, *Revelation*, 192; Koester, *Revelation*, 176; Krodell, *Revelation*, 323; Loernez, *Apocalypse*, 129.

¹⁸⁵ See Barclay, *Revelation*, 2.180; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 280; Buchanan, *Revelation*, 505; Ladd, *Revelation*, 254; Roloff, *Revelation*, 218; Witherington, *Revelation*, 243; Mounce, *Revelation*, 354; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 683; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 198; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 224. Beale generally follows this approach but views it primarily as a symbol for justice in judgment (*Revelation*, 957-962). Aune argues that this was drawn from this context but would likely be understood with respect to Jesus' death in the context of the Christian community (*Revelation*, 3.1057). Swete concludes that the notion of Jesus' shed blood is still present here, but the imagery of the blood of the enemies is more prominent (*Apocalypse*, 252).

¹⁸⁶ See Caird, *Revelation*, 243.

¹⁸⁷ See Lilje, *Last Book*, 244; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 384.

¹⁸⁸ See Boxall, *Revelation*, 274; Harrington, *Revelation*, 192. Carrell argues that this may be a multivalent image that incorporates all three possibilities (*Jesus and the Angels*, 200).

¹⁸⁹ The imagery of the λόγος in John 1:1, 14 and the λόγος τῆς ζωῆς in 1 John 1:1 provide potential links with Revelation. Mounce finds this to be a "striking link" with the fourth gospel (*Revelation*, 354; see also Guthrie, "Christology," 402, 404; Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1058; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 253). As G. Osborne notes, however, the particular title "word of God" does not occur in John 1 (*Revelation*, 683). Within the context of John 1, the focus appears to be upon the pre-incarnate Jesus. In 1 John 1:1, the phrase could refer to Jesus as the word or to his proclamation.

¹⁹⁰ So Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1058; William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (rev. ed.; The Daily Study Bible; Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1976), 2:181; Harrington, *Revelation*, 193; Boxall, *Revelation*, 272; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2:134; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 253; Farrer, *Rebirth*, 170; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 217-218; Ford, *Revelation*, 319. Comblin connects this with imagery from Isaiah (*Le Christ*, 81), but the connection with Wis 18 is more compelling.

in the context of the final plague of Exodus.¹⁹¹ Similar imagery is utilized in Rev 19, where the rider on the white horse leads the armies of heaven against the enemies of the people of God. The use of this imagery, then, connects with the Exodus imagery employed in Revelation.¹⁹² In addition, the title “word of God” in 19:13 is related to expressions elsewhere in Revelation (see 1:2, 9; 6:9; 17:17; 19:9; and 20:4). In some cases, this phrase may be used to refer to the content of John’s message (1:2; 17:17; 19:9).¹⁹³ In other cases, it appears that it refers more broadly to divine testimony as expressed in the Old Testament scriptures and in witness to Jesus (1:9; 6:9; 20:4).¹⁹⁴ Although there is not a direct one-to-one relationship between 19:13 and these other occurrences, a conceptual link may be seen. John connects Jesus with a variety of motifs drawn from the Old Testament texts.¹⁹⁵ He likewise connects Jesus with the revealing of the contents of the Apocalypse (1:1-2; 19:10; 22:16), and Christian faithfulness to the word of God is connected with faithfulness to Jesus (1:9; 20:4; cf. also 6:9).

Next, as in 1:16, the imagery used in 19:15 of the sharp, double-edged sword,¹⁹⁶ the striking of the nations,¹⁹⁷ and the shepherding with an iron rod¹⁹⁸ likely alludes to several Old Testament texts.¹⁹⁹ The first of these is Isa 49:2,²⁰⁰ which describes God’s preparation of the servant. Isa 11:4 may have also contributed to the wording, as the phrase “striking the nations” (ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη) in Rev 19:15 is likely derived from Isaiah’s reference to the “striking” of earth (LXX: πατάξει γῆν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ). This motif is also picked up by

¹⁹¹ Aune notes that the double meaning (both “word” and “pestilence”) of the Hebrew **דבר** may have helped to provide this link between the personified word and the plague. He cites the example of Hab 3:5, where **דבר** is incorrectly translated as *λόγος* in the LXX. See *Revelation*, 3.1058-1059.

¹⁹² See below on the Exodus imagery in Revelation.

¹⁹³ See G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 56.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 56.

¹⁹⁵ Beale also suggests that 19:13 may allude to Jesus’ “execution of final judgment on the remaining enemies of God in fulfillment of OT and NT prophecy” (*Revelation*, 958).

¹⁹⁶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται. Cf. also Rev 1:16; 2:12. The image of the sword was also connected with God in the Old Testament. See Isa 27:1; 66:16; Jer 9:16 (MT); Ezek 29:8-9. Aune notes that Isa 11:4 was interpreted messianically in Second Temple Judaism (*Revelation*, 3.1053; see also Smalley, *Revelation*, 494). See *Ps. Sol.* 17:21-25; *4 Ezra* 13:9-11, 37-38; *4QpIsa*^a 8-10.

¹⁹⁷ ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ πατάξῃ τὰ ἔθνη.

¹⁹⁸ αὐτὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. Cf. also Rev 2:27; 12:5.

¹⁹⁹ Similar usage may also be observed in 2 Thess 2:8. Cf. Heb 4:12.

²⁰⁰ ἔθηκεν τὸ στόμα μου ὥσπερ μάχαιραν ὀξεῖαν (LXX).

other Jewish texts.²⁰¹ The third passage lying behind the phrasing in 19:15 is Ps 2:9, and John's wording here corresponds to that of the LXX.²⁰² The reference to a sharp sword provides another conceptual link with Wis 18:15-16.²⁰³

As in the case of the scene in 1:12-20, John has drawn from a variety of texts in his depiction of Jesus in 19:11-16. The composite image here draws from a variety of traditions, and particularly from those depicting God or his chosen representative as coming to the defense of his people.²⁰⁴ Several of the Old Testament passages used by John in Rev 19, as we have noted, appear to serve a role in John's presentation elsewhere in Revelation. John utilizes descriptive phrases and motifs that may be found elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writings, but the resulting image in Rev 19 is distinctive to John. John has, then, woven together these various phrases and images in creating this significant portrayal of Jesus as the rider on the white horse.

Summary

The images surveyed above play a significant role in the portrayal of Jesus. For the narrative of the book, the Lamb provides the most significant ongoing image of Jesus. At other points, key images, such as the throne in chapters four and five, the glorious figure in chapter one, and the rider on the white horse in chapter nineteen, play a significant role in communicating particular aspects of John's understanding of Jesus' character and role. With each of these, connections to key Old Testament texts may be observed. In addition to these major themes, John employs a variety of other images drawn from the Old Testament as part of his depiction of Jesus in Revelation. We shall now consider how these minor images and titles supplement John's major themes and the way in which John continues to draw from significant Old Testament passages.

²⁰¹ *Ps. Sol.* 17:24, 35; *1 En.* 62:2; *4 Ezra* 13:9-11, 37-38; 1QSb5 24-25; see Mounce, *Revelation*, 355; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 118-119.

²⁰² Rev 19:15 ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. *Ps. Sol.* 17:23-24 demonstrates a similar messianic interpretation. See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1061).

²⁰³ The phrase is ξίφος ὅξυ used in Wis 18:15. See Mounce, *Revelation*, 354.

²⁰⁴ See Söding, "Gott und Lamm," 98.

Minor Images and Titles

The following discussion centers on other images employed with less frequency in Revelation than those above to depict Jesus. Although they appear not to function in Revelation with the same level of importance, they nevertheless reflect engagement, at least to a degree, with Old Testament writings. For each of these, the evidence from Revelation will be considered, and we will direct our attention to the Old Testament passages that served a role in the development of John's imagery. I will delay assessment of the wider patterns of John's usage, however, until the conclusion of this chapter. For the sake of simplicity, we will consider each of these images in roughly the order in which they appear in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1

Beyond what we have already discussed concerning the extended description of Jesus in 1:12-20, several images and titles are used in the opening chapter of Revelation that reflect connections with particular Old Testament passages. In this section we will consider the use of these titles and images and the possible sources for each.

Faithful Witness and Firstborn of the Dead

In the epistolary greeting in 1:5, Jesus is described as the "faithful witness,"²⁰⁵ the "firstborn of the dead,"²⁰⁶ and the "ruler of the kings of the earth."²⁰⁷ These titles are typically seen as arising from Ps 89:37 (LXX 88:38) and 89:27 (LXX 88:28).²⁰⁸ The first half of this Psalm deals with God's covenant with the house of David.²⁰⁹ Ps

²⁰⁵ ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός. This should likely be taken as a single title. See G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 62. Cf. also 2:13 and 3:14.

²⁰⁶ ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν.

²⁰⁷ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. This title will be considered separately in connection with other royal titles and images.

²⁰⁸ So Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 428; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 110-111; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.14; Moyise, *Old Testament*, 116; Holtz, *Christologie*, 55; Hofius, "Das Zeugnis," 512; Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt*, 42-53. Fekkes notes the suggestion that Isa 55 may lie behind the imagery but argues that Ps 89 is far more likely (*Isaiah*, 111-112). See also Hultberg, "Messianic Exegesis," 54-55.

²⁰⁹ This is contrasted with the lament in verses 39-52 (MT). See Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC 20; Waco: Word, 1990), 416-417.

89:37 (LXX 88:38) depicts the establishment of the throne of David as a faithful witness in the skies.²¹⁰ Ps 89:27 (LXX 88:28) describes God's promise to make him the "firstborn" and exalt him above the kings of the earth. The imagery of God as a "faithful witness" may also be drawn from Isa 43:10-12.²¹¹

If John is drawing from this imagery, it appears that he has transformed it within the context of Revelation.²¹² The identification of Jesus as the "faithful witness" connects thematically with the concept of "witness" elsewhere in Revelation (1:2, 5, 9; 2:13; 3:14; 6:9; 11:3-12; 12:11, 17; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4; 22:16, 20).²¹³ In turn, the presentation of Jesus as the firstborn is connected with his resurrection, a theme that finds expression in Rev 1:18 and 2:8. Finally, as we will see in a subsequent section, the phrase "ruler of the kings of the earth" is part of a wider theme of Jesus' kingship. In applying these motifs to Jesus, John has suggested relationships with concepts from Ps 89, such as the Davidic throne, while adapting them to wider concerns within Revelation.²¹⁴ These three titles, then, introduce key motifs throughout the rest of the book.²¹⁵

Exodus Imagery

Although Revelation as a whole draws heavily upon the imagery of the Exodus,²¹⁶ only a few examples may be seen of John's application of this imagery to Jesus. Several such instances are worthy of consideration.

²¹⁰ See Paul G. Mosca, "Once Again the Heavenly Witness of Ps 89:38," *JBL* 105 (1986): 27-37. Tate views this not as a reference to the throne but a heavenly sign, such as the rainbow (*Psalms 51-100*, 425-427).

²¹¹ Beale, *Revelation*, 297.

²¹² This is not to say that certain elements are not common to both texts. See Moyise, *Old Testament*, 117.

²¹³ On martyrdom in Revelation, see Reddish, "Martyr Christology," 86. The term μάρτυς, despite connections made with death in Revelation, still carries the primary meaning of "witness." The notion of Jesus as "faithful witness" moves beyond the testimony of Jesus before Pilate and likely refers to the ongoing testimony of Jesus through the Spirit and through Christian prophecy. See Mazzaferri, "Martyria Iesou," 114-122. Comblin suggests that the link John makes between witness and death may have played an important role in the later development of the notion of "martyrdom" (*Le Christ*, 160).

²¹⁴ See Moyise, *Old Testament*, 116-118.

²¹⁵ So Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt*, 224; see also Osten-Sacken, "Christologie," 255-266.

²¹⁶ In addition to specific details, such as the statement about the beast in 13:4 ("who is like the beast?"), which may be a parody of Exod 15:11, and the "hidden manna" of 2:17, which may be an allusion to Exod 16:32, elements of Revelation's overall narrative may be seen as reflecting elements

First, Jesus is associated with the designation of the people of God as a kingdom (βασιλεία) and priests (ἱερείς) to God (1:6).²¹⁷ This motif is repeated in 5:10 and in 20:6. In the first two texts, the separation of a people to be a kingdom and priesthood is described as resulting from Jesus' death.²¹⁸ The final text, 20:6, builds upon this imagery. An important change takes place in the wording here, as the people are designated as priests "of God and Christ."²¹⁹ This motif of a "kingdom" and "priests" is drawn from Exod 19:6, where the nation of Israel, following the Exodus, is set apart unto God.²²⁰ This imagery appears in Isaiah in relationship to the "New Exodus" motif,²²¹ and other early Christian texts made use of this same imagery.²²²

In Rev 15, those who overcome the beast stand beside a sea of glass and sing the "song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb" (15:3).²²³ A reference here to Moses and the Exodus is seemingly clear, but the source of the particular content of the song is much debated.²²⁴ The association of Jesus with Moses and the composition of a new song serve the purpose of drawing an analogy

from the Exodus story, such as the bowl judgments in Rev 16 (cf. Exod 7-11). See Gundry, "Angelomorphic Christology," 677; Ford, *Revelation*, 222; Sweet, *Revelation*, 61-62.

²¹⁷ On this, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse* (NTAbh 7; Münster: Aschendorff, 1972).

²¹⁸ 1:5 λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ; 5:9 ἐσφάγης καὶ ἡγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματι σου.

²¹⁹ 20:6 ἱερείς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; 1:6 ἱερείς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ; 5:10 τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν.

²²⁰ Exod 19:6 (MT) אֲנִי מְלָכָה כְּהִנִּי וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ.

²²¹ Isa 61:6; cf. also 66:21. Beale suggests that the image of "reigning" may be influenced by Dan 7:22 (*Use of Daniel*, 216-219). See also Comblin, *Le Christ*, 29-30.

²²² See 1 Pet 2:5, 9.

²²³ On this, see Bauckham, *Climax*, 296-307; Wolfgang Fenske, "Das Lied des Mose, des Knechtes Gottes und das Lied des Lammes (Apokalypse des Johannes 15:3f): Der Text und seine Bedeutung für die Johannes-Apokalypse," *ZNW* 90 (1999): 250-264.

²²⁴ Although the song does contribute to the wider theology and imagery of the book, exhaustive consideration will not be given to the contents of the song. In summary, it appears that John is alluding to the song of Moses in Exod 15. The relationship between the songs of Rev 15 and Exod 15 is of a thematic, rather than literary, nature. For the literary composition of the song in Rev 15:3-4, texts such as Pss 86:9; 111:3 (LXX 110:2); 139:14; 145:17; Deut 32:4; Isa 2:2; Exod 34:10; Jer 10:7; 16:19; Amos 3:13; 4:13 have contributed to the wording and themes of the song. Bauckham has argued that John has utilized a compositional technique similar to that of Isa 12, where a song celebrating what may be termed a "new Exodus" alludes to Exod 15 and develops imagery from the Psalms (*Climax*, 299). For a discussion of the content of the song, see also Fenske, "Das Lied des Mose," 250-264.

between the Exodus and the deliverance Jesus has provided.²²⁵ As Longman has noted, this “new song” in 15:3-4 likely alludes to divine warrior imagery as well (see Isa 42:10, 13; Ps 149:1, 6-9).²²⁶

Son of God

Rev 2:18 contains the sole appearance of the title “son of God” within the book, but the image of God as the father of Jesus also appears in 1:6; 2:28; 3:21; and 14:1. Although the “son of God” language was used in the Roman imperial cult,²²⁷ there is not sufficient evidence to indicate that this imagery was adopted from emperor worship rather than in keeping with other early Christian usage.²²⁸ Given the relatively late date in comparison with some other early Christian texts, it is likely that Revelation reflects early Christian convictions rather than a particular innovation in the application of this term to Jesus.

With respect to John’s use of Old Testament texts in the description of Jesus as the “Son of God,” the most compelling links may be found with Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14.²²⁹ Within the context of the message to the church at Thyatira, the promise to the overcomer of receiving authority over the nations (2:26-27) is drawn from Ps 2:9.

²²⁵ See Bauckham, *Climax*, 298.

²²⁶ Longman, “Divine Warrior,” 301.

²²⁷ See, for example, *IGR* 3.933; 4.201, 311; *IvEph* 2.404. G. Osborne notes the significance of Apollo for the city of Thyatira, which may explain the use of the title in this context (*Revelation*, 153; so also Mounce, *Revelation*, 85; Beale, *Revelation*, 259; Krodel, *Revelation*, 122; Smalley, *Revelation*, 72).

²²⁸ This is not to say that this may not have taken on a polemical tone in light of other language directed against emperor worship in Revelation. The primary source, however, does not appear to be the Roman imperial cult. Early Christian adoption of this title was likely a reflection upon Old Testament texts (see Ps 2:7; 89:26-27; 2 Sam 7:14) and upon statements where Jesus refers to God as “father” (see Matt 7:21; 10:32, 33; 11:27; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17; 18:10, 19, 35; 20:23; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; Luke 10:22; 22:29; 24:49; John 2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:32, 40; 8:54; 10:15, 18, 25, 29, 37; 14:2, 7, 21, 23; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24; 16:23, 32; 20:17). Its employment in Revelation, then, is best seen in light of early Christian use and then secondarily in light of its usage in the imperial cult. So Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1976), 30, 63; contra A. Y. Collins, “Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult,” 253. Beck suggests that John may have generally avoided the title due to the widespread usage in emperor worship (“Christology,” 269).

²²⁹ R. H. Charles suggests Ps 2:7 is a more compelling source due to associations elsewhere with Ps 2:9 in particular (*Revelation*, 1.68; see also Mounce, *Revelation*, 85; Friedrich, “Adapt or Resist,” 189; Caird, *Revelation*, 43; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 100; Holtz, *Christologie*, 21; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 180-181; cf. also Hengel, *Son of God*, 64 on this relationship in other early Christian thought). Beale suggests that John may be drawing upon a Jewish interpretative tradition that linked the “son of God” of Dan 3 with the “son of man” in Dan 7 (*Revelation*, 259).

Earlier in the same Psalm, the Lord's anointed is declared to be a "son" to God and God to be his "father."²³⁰ Comblin notes that this reference, within the context of Ps 2, was likely understood as a messianic title.²³¹ John may be also utilizing similar imagery from Ps 89:27 (LXX 88:28) where David is named as the firstborn and is exalted above the kings of the earth.²³² In the promise to the overcomers made later in 21:7 (ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός), it appears that 2 Sam 7:14 (ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν) lies behind the wording utilized by John.²³³ Connections with Davidic imagery make it likely that John is drawing from this conceptual background as well.

Although connections with Old Testament texts such as Ps 2 and Ps 89 (LXX 88) are plausible, John's employment of divine sonship language in 1:6; 2:18, 28; 3:21; and 14:1 is likely due to its use in early Christianity. What is interesting to note, however, is John's development of this imagery. In each of the occurrences prior to the vision of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22), the image of God as father is connected specifically to Jesus.²³⁴ Although certain promises to the overcomers are linked with the idea of God as the father of Jesus (2:28; 3:21), Jesus' unique role as the son of God is highlighted in these promises.²³⁵ The promise is then made, however, in 21:7 to the overcomer that "I will be his God and he will be my son."

²³⁰ The context of Ps 2 appears to be that of celebrating the coronation of the king. The designation of the king as "son" within the context of the Psalm dealt with the covenantal relationship between the king and God. This designation does not identify the king as a divine being. See Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco: Word, 1983), 64-69. Aune notes the connection between messianic expectation and the designation of the king as the "son of God" ("Christian Prophecy," 409). In Christian usage, this terminology carried specific meaning for the relationship between Jesus and God.

²³¹ Comblin, *Le Christ*, 180.

²³² Use of Ps 89 may be observed elsewhere in Revelation. The image of the firstborn in 1:5, which will be considered in turn, is likely drawn from Ps 89:27 (LXX 88:28). The phrase τίς ὅμοιος τῷ θηρίῳ in Rev 13:4 may also mimic Ps 89:7 (LXX 88:7).

²³³ So Beale, *Revelation*, 1058; Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1129.

²³⁴ πατρί αὐτοῦ (1:6); ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (2:18); τοῦ πατρός μου (2:28); τοῦ πατρός μου (3:5); τοῦ πατρός μου (3:21); τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ (14:1). The epistolary greeting in 1:4 is somewhat striking in this regard as the more standard reference to the "father" or "our father" found in other early Christian epistles (both disputed and undisputed Pauline epistles contain a reference to the "father" in the greeting; cf. also 1 Pet 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 1; Ign. Eph. sal.; Smyrn. sal.; Polycarp. sal.) is replaced by the title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. It is likely going too far to assert that John has done this to avoid a reference to God as father at this juncture in the book, but it is interesting nonetheless. See Aune, *Revelation*, 1.30; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.68; Friedrich, "Adapt or Resist," 190.

²³⁵ See G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 740. Boxall argues that the use in Revelation should be understood in a heightened sense similar to the usage in the Gospel of John (*Revelation*, 62-63).

The reference in 21:7, then, contributes to the larger theme of the overcomer sharing in the eschatological blessings through Jesus.

Pierced One

The picture of the peoples of the earth mourning over the one who was pierced is found in Rev 1:7. Though not specifically quoted, Zech 12:10-14 seems to be the source of the imagery.²³⁶ In this text, Zechariah describes the mourning of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem over the “one whom they pierced” as a result of God pouring out a spirit of grace and supplication.²³⁷

This same text appears to have been influential elsewhere in the New Testament. John 19:37 lifts wording from the passage to describe the soldiers piercing the side of Jesus.²³⁸ More significant, however, is the similar combination in Matt 24:30 of the quote from Zechariah with the imagery from Dan 7:13 of the son of man coming on the clouds.²³⁹ John’s combination of Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10-14 appears to be independent from Matt 24:30,²⁴⁰ but both texts differ from the LXX of Zechariah and may reflect a common non-LXX source.²⁴¹

It appears that in Revelation the imagery has been incorporated from Zechariah with some minor changes to fit the context of the book. As Beale notes, the additions of πᾶς ὀφθαλμός and τῆς γῆς suggest that John has widened the scope from the particular (the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) to the universal.²⁴² The referent of the statement in Zechariah regarding the “pierced one”

²³⁶ The particular text used here is debated due to differences with both the MT and the LXX. See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 9; A. Y. Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 542; Jauhiainen, *Zechariah*, 102-107. Beale suggests that the choice of this text may be due to the use of πρωτότοκος (*Revelation*, 196).

²³⁷ R. L. Smith notes a variety of interpretations regarding this figure. Some commentators link this with figures, such as Josiah, Onias III, or the successors to Deutero-Isaiah. Smith also notes that in subsequent interpretations in both Jewish and Christian circles this came to be viewed as messianic (Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco: Word, 1984), 278).

²³⁸ So Mounce, *Revelation*, 51. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 355.

²³⁹ See Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 201; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.52. Aune notes examples of this combination in *Did.* 16:8 and Justin, *Dial.* 14:8, and he suggests that the two texts may also be conflated in Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27 (*Revelation*, 1.52, 55).

²⁴⁰ The relationship between Rev 1:7 and Matt 24:30 will be explored within chapter four.

²⁴¹ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 9; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 72.

²⁴² Beale, *Revelation*, 196; also Aune, *Revelation*, 1:55; Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt*, 101.

is debated, but the interest John displays elsewhere in the death of Jesus (see 1:5; 5:9) indicates that John has applied this image from Zechariah to Jesus in particular.²⁴³ It seems likely that John has utilized this text as a result of reflection upon the death of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus on the coming of the Son of Man.

Star

As noted in the previous chapter, John associates stars with Jesus in several locations throughout Revelation.²⁴⁴ Some connections with Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish writings may be observed.

The imagery of the seven stars in the hand of Jesus is introduced in 1:16 (cf. 1:20) and is later picked up in 2:1 and 3:1. Although some have suggested that texts such as Dan 12:3 and *1 En.* 104:2 may lie behind this imagery,²⁴⁵ it appears that a stronger case may be made for the incorporation of imperial imagery in these references to stars.²⁴⁶

What are we to make of the fact, then, that Jesus is also said to be the “morning star” in 22:16?²⁴⁷ In this case, the imagery is most likely drawn from Num

²⁴³ Although many commentators have seen this as referring to mourning over judgment (so Mounce, *Revelation*, 51; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.17; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 432), the context is ambiguous (so G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 68-69; Caird, *Revelation*, 18). Beale argues that there is not sufficient reason to regard John as not adopting this as an image of repentance as employed by Zechariah. See Beale, *Revelation*, 197.

²⁴⁴ As argued in the previous chapter, associations with imperial imagery are most persuasive. M. Moore has argued that John is interacting here with other elements of Greco-Roman culture (“Jesus Christ: ‘Superstar,’” 82-91). Although such connections are possible, the most immediate cultural source appears to be the usage in connection with the Roman emperor. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 269.

²⁴⁵ Beale argues that the connection with Daniel is most likely in light of the wider influence of Daniel in Rev 1 (see *Revelation*, 210-211). Swete draws attention to the general Old Testament imagery of the stars being in the hand of God in texts such as Job 38:31-32 and Isa 40:12 (*Apocalypse*, 18). For astrological considerations related to the seven stars, see Aune, *Revelation*, 1:97-98. Roloff suggests a connection with Mithras (*Revelation*, 36).

²⁴⁶ See Janzen, “Jesus of the Apocalypse,” 652-653; Caird, *Revelation*, 15. Loisy posits that these seven stars may reflect a constellation or astrological movement (*Apocalypse*, 81), but the connection with imperial imagery seems more likely.

²⁴⁷ Greek: ὁ ἄστηρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός. The occurrence in 2:28 (τὸν ἄστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν) is debated by commentators. Connections with Dan 12:3 (Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 471), Venus as a symbol of victory (Smalley, *Revelation*, 79; cf. Boxall, *Revelation*, 318; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 343), and Lucifer/Babylon (cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 1:212) have been suggested. In light of the later use of this image to refer to Jesus (see 22:16), it seems best to assume that John is referring here to Jesus as well. So Swete, *Apocalypse*, 47; Beale, *Revelation*, 268; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.77; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.212; Hughes, *Revelation*, 52; Murphy, *Fallen*, 141; Harrington, *Revelation*, 255;

24:17.²⁴⁸ In this text, Balaam speaks of a star arising out of Jacob.²⁴⁹ Given the references to Balaam elsewhere in Revelation and the use of “rod” imagery in Num 24:17 (MT),²⁵⁰ it appears probable that John was familiar with the passage and alludes to it in depicting Jesus as the morning star. This imagery is adopted by other Second Temple Jewish writings as an image with messianic implications.²⁵¹ Other early Christian texts connect Jesus with a star as well.²⁵²

Additional examples of stars may be seen in Revelation, but these deal more with the cosmic implications of judgment and not with the presentation of Jesus (6:13; 8:10, 11, 12; 9:1; 12:1, 4).²⁵³

Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last

Distinctively in the book of Revelation, three closely related titles, “alpha and omega” (22:13; cf. 1:8; 21:6),²⁵⁴ “beginning and end” (22:13; cf. 21:6),²⁵⁵ and “first and last” (1:17; 2:8; 22:13),²⁵⁶ are used in reference to Jesus.²⁵⁷ More will be said in

Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 343; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 43; Ford, *Revelation*, 407. For a helpful summary of the options, see G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 168.

²⁴⁸ So G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 793; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.219; Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1226; Beale, *Revelation*, 1147-1148; Witherington, *Revelation*, 282; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 778; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 180.

²⁴⁹ LXX: ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ἰακωβ. MT: כִּי־יֵצֵא כּוֹכֵב מִיַּעֲקֹב. The image of a star rising would then provide the conceptual link with John’s use of πρωῒνος in Revelation.

²⁵⁰ Rev 2:14. The connection with the rod imagery is noted by Sweet (*Revelation*, 97). The MT reads מִצֵּבָה while the LXX has ἄνθρωπος.

²⁵¹ See *T. Levi* 18:3; *T. Jud.* 24:1; *IQM* 11:6-7; *4QTest* 9-13; *CD* 7:18-20. So Mounce, *Revelation*, 409; Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1226-1227; Smalley, *Revelation*, 577. Cf. *Mal* 4:2 (LXX 3:20); *Zech* 6:12 (LXX).

²⁵² *Matt* 2:1-12; *2 Pet* 1:19; Justin, *I Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 106.

²⁵³ The sweeping of the stars from heaven by the tail of the dragon in 12:4 may reflect further association of the stars with the angelic host, as is the case in 1:20. These cosmic images draw from certain Old Testament traditions such as those found in *Isa* 13:10; 34:4 (cf. *Joel* 2:10, 31) and reflect imagery contained elsewhere in the New Testament (*Matt* 24:29; *Mark* 13:24-25). Wright has suggested that the image of the stars falling from the sky may have political connotations (N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 305).

²⁵⁴ τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ.

²⁵⁵ ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

²⁵⁶ ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος.

²⁵⁷ The theme of the one who “is, was, and is coming” (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5), though associated with these phrases, will not be considered extensively as it is only used in Revelation to refer to God. Many regard this phrase as arising from reflection upon the self-disclosure of God in *Exod* 3:14,

chapter five regarding the deployment of this theme in Revelation, but we give consideration briefly here to possible sources of the imagery.

With regard to its origin, Bauckham argues that these phrases are drawn from Isa 44:6 (LXX: ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα) where we have a declaration of God reflecting the monotheistic emphasis present in that portion of the book.²⁵⁸ Other texts, such as Isa 41:4 (LXX: ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἰμι) and 48:12 (LXX: ἐγὼ εἰμι πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), may also be part of the larger thematic background.²⁵⁹ The other merisms were then formulated as a result of reflection upon this imagery.²⁶⁰ These expressions do bear some similarity to ones found in the Greek magical papyri,²⁶¹ but the background of these Old Testament texts is more persuasive, especially given John's use of Isaiah in Revelation.²⁶²

which the LXX renders with ὁ ὢν. This is also expressed in Philo, *Abr.* 24; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.350; Jos. Ag. Ap. 2.190. See Aune, *Revelation*, 1.30; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 5; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 60.

²⁵⁸ Bauckham, *Theology*, 58; see also Söding, "Gott und das Lamm," 79; Hofius, "Das Zeugnis," 515; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 71-72; Ford, *Revelation*, 367.

²⁵⁹ Isa 43:10 also likely contributes to the wider conceptual background, as God declares that no gods existed before him nor will exist after him (see Swete, *Apocalypse*, 10). Beale also suggests that the background of keeping the law from Ⲛ to ⲓ (in its totality) could lie behind this imagery as well (*Revelation*, 187).

²⁶⁰ See Beale, *Revelation*, 1055. He argues that the phrase in 1:8b (ὁ ὢν καὶ τὸ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος) may also demonstrate links with Isaiah through the threefold designations found in Isa 41:4; 43:10; and 48:12.

²⁶¹ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 5; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:57; Farrer, *Rebirth*, 263-265; Aune, "Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic," 489-491. Within the Greek magical papyri, interest in the divine name could be expressed through the combination of vowels. Among these, alpha and omega could be treated as significant due to their status as the first and last vowels in the Greek alphabet. The form ΙΑΩ appears to be significant as well due to its use as a Greek form of the divine name. Aune notes a number of examples from the Greek magical papyri that connect Α and Ω with the divine name (see "Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic," 490-491). Lincicum suggests that the association of Jesus with Α and Ω may be an exegesis of ΙΑΩ as Ἰησοῦς ἄλφα ὦ ("The Origin of 'Alpha and Omega'" (*Revelation* 1.8; 21.6; 22.13): A Suggestion," *JGRChJ* 6 (2009): 128-133). For the phrase, "is, was, and is coming," Aune also notes a parallel to Zeus in *Paus.* 10.12 (see *Revelation*, 1.31). R. H. Charles notes connections of ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος to an Orphic logion cited by Plato, *Leg.* 4.7 (*Revelation*, 2.220). See also W. J. P. Boyd, "I am Alpha and Omega' (Rev 1, 8; 21, 6; 22,13)," *SE* 2 (1964): 526-531.

²⁶² Although it appears that John may draw from the wider cultural context in his use of Α and Ω, the entire complex of titles is in keeping with the wider themes found in Isaiah. Such usage, in engaging the wider cultural context, would serve to not only identify the "One on the throne" as the most high God but also to associate Jesus with God in a unique fashion. As Beale notes, however, this would be in combination with the Old Testament background (*Revelation*, 200).

The use of these phrases, then, associates Jesus with God in a unique way that is consistent with Old Testament convictions concerning the identity of God.²⁶³ As Swete notes, the final occurrence in 22:13 is “the crowning instance in this Book of the attribution of Divine prerogatives to the Incarnate Son...”²⁶⁴

Revelation 2-3

Prescripts to the Messages

As we turn to minor images found in Revelation 2-3, further examples of John’s use of Old Testament writings may be seen. Generally speaking, the messages to the seven churches, as noted in the previous chapter, appear to be a blend of genres rather than fitting the usual designation of a “letter.” One of the formal features of these messages is the phrase τὰδε λέγει at the outset of each message (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Though it may bear a resemblance to texts from the wider Greco-Roman world,²⁶⁵ this formula also appears in a number of Old Testament passages, particularly in contexts in which God speaks through a prophet.²⁶⁶ Its use in Revelation does not appear to draw upon any one particular text but reflects phrasing found throughout the various Old Testament writings.²⁶⁷ Coupled with indications of John’s role as a prophet, the use of this formula may allude to these Old Testament prophetic discourses reporting the words of God.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Bauckham, *Theology*, 54-58; Beale, *Revelation*, 1138. It should be noted that the use of these phrases does not cause confusion between Jesus and God or suggest that Jesus replaces God in any way.

²⁶⁴ Swete, *Apocalypse*, 307. Aune likewise describes this as demonstrating the “strikingly high Christology” in Revelation (*Revelation*, 3.1237).

²⁶⁵ See Aune, “Form and Function,” 187-189. Aune notes the LXX usage but stresses the use in Greco-Roman sources. See also BDAG, 589.

²⁶⁶ For examples in the LXX, see Judg 6:8; Amos 1:11; Mic 3:5; Isa 52:5; Jer 2:2; 6:6; 16:5; Ezek 11:17; 13:13; 28:2; 29:8; 34:2; 36:13; 37:21; 43:18; 45:9. See Aune, *Revelation*, 1.141; Beale, *Revelation*, 229.

²⁶⁷ The use of this formula may suggest presuppositions John shares with his readers. This will be explored in the following chapter.

²⁶⁸ So Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 53-54; Beale, *Revelation*, 229; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 113; Boring, “The Voice of Jesus,” 351.

Other Titles and Images

Several other titles and images used in Rev 2-3 are also worth mentioning. Although there may be connections between the imagery utilized by John and the particular settings of the seven churches, application of themes and images from the Old Testament to Jesus may be observed.²⁶⁹

First, Jesus makes the statement in 2:23 that he is the one who “searches minds and hearts” (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφούς καὶ καρδίας). This phrasing may allude to texts such as Ps 7:10 (LXX 8:10) and Jer 11:20, which depict God as the one who searches hearts and minds.²⁷⁰

Next, the title “Holy and True One” (ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός) is used in 3:7.²⁷¹ It seems likely that John is drawing from OT descriptions of God. The “holy one” is used in a variety of texts as a designation for the God of Israel, such as in Isa 40:25.²⁷² As Charles notes, it also occurs alongside other titles to refer to God.²⁷³ John uses the adjective ἅγιος to describe God in Rev 4:8, and both ἅγιος and ἀληθινός are used in 6:10.²⁷⁴ The adjective ἀληθινός is also used to describe God in several Old Testament texts, such as Exod 34:6; Isa 65:16; and Ps 84:15,²⁷⁵ and is also used in 3:14, where Jesus is “the faithful and true witness.”²⁷⁶

Two additional titles are found in 3:14 in the final message to the church at Laodicea: the “Amen” (ὁ ἀμήν) and the “Beginning of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ

²⁶⁹ Contra Ramsay, who gives priority to the author’s knowledge of the local setting (William M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (ed. Mark W. Wilson; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 201-201).

²⁷⁰ See Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 74.

²⁷¹ The reference to the “key of David” (κλεῖν Δαυίδ) will be considered in the next subsection along with other Davidic imagery in Revelation.

²⁷² See Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 48:17; 49:7; 55:5 (cf. also 2 Kgs 19:22; Ps 16:10; 71:22; 78:41; Hab 3:3). So Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 99; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 187. Beale notes messianic connections with the use of this title, with the adjective ἀληθινός emphasizing Jesus as the true messiah (*Revelation*, 283). The application of this title to Jesus in other early Christian writings will be considered in the following chapter.

²⁷³ See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1:85. He notes further examples in *1 En.* 1.3; 14.1; cf. also 10.1; 25.3; 84.1.

²⁷⁴ The adjective ὅσιος is also used in 15:4 and 16:5.

²⁷⁵ See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.86

²⁷⁶ On this theme, see above.

τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ).²⁷⁷ For the first of these titles, ὁ ἀμήν, possible connections exist with a few different Old Testament contexts. First, it has been suggested that this title stems from the Hebrew text of Isa 65:16.²⁷⁸ Next, Silberman has proposed that this title is actually derived from a mistranslation of Prov 8:30.²⁷⁹ Finally, Beckwith has posited that the use of this title could be seen as a reference to Jesus' use of ἀμήν.²⁸⁰ While a reference to Jesus' use of ἀμήν is possible, an allusion to Isa 65 is more likely, given its potential connection with the following phrase in 3:14, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ.

The second title, the “beginning/ruler of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ) likewise draws from Old Testament imagery regarding the original creation or the new creation.²⁸¹ Some, such as Burney and Silberman, have argued that this title portrays Jesus in similar fashion as “wisdom” in the book of Proverbs.²⁸² Burney notes connections with Gen 1:1 and Prov 8:22 and challenges interpretations that limit ἀρχή to the notion of “source.”²⁸³ Silberman builds upon this connection and contends that the title ὁ ἀμήν should be seen as depicting Jesus

²⁷⁷ The title ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός has been considered above.

²⁷⁸ Isa 65:16 מְבַרֵךְ יְהוָה (MT); τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἀληθινόν (LXX). See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.94; Beale, *Revelation*, 297, 299; and id., *Old Testament*, 273-294; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.255; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 116; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 57; Slater, *Christ and Community*, 147; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 72; Hofius, “Das Zeugnis,” 518; Holtz, *Christologie*, 142.

²⁷⁹ ἀμήν would be a mistranslation of מְבַרֵךְ. Lou H. Silberman, “Farewell to ὁ ἀμήν,” *JBL* 82.2 (1963): 213-215. Silberman bases this theory on a midrash of Prov 8:22. Further connections in this regard will be explored below. So also Trudinger, “Some Observations,” 87-88.

²⁸⁰ Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 488. The synoptic gospels feature a single ἀμήν (see, for example, Matt 5:18, 26; 6:2, 5, 16; Mark 3:28; 10:15; 11:23; Luke 21:32) while the Gospel of John features a double ἀμήν (see, for example, John 3:3, 5; 5:19; 13:16, 20). Swete notes the connection with Isa 65:16 but concludes that an allusion to Jesus' teaching provides a simpler explanation (*Apocalypse*, 59).

²⁸¹ Talbert argues that ἀρχή should be translated here as “ruler,” as notions of Jesus as a created being or as the creator do not fit with statements elsewhere in Revelation (“Christology,” 168). He does not consider, however, the possible connection to the new creation. In addition, commentators have also suggested familiarity with the letter to the Colossians, where Jesus is described in chapter one as the ἀρχή (1:18) and the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (1:15). See R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.94; Mounce, *Revelation*, 108; Comblin, *Le Christ*, 84.

²⁸² See Prov 8:22-31. Charles Fox Burney, “Christ as the APXH of Creation,” *JTS* 27 (1926): 160-177; Silberman, “Farewell.” See also Murphy, *Fallen*, 160. Swete argues that although this title “rests” on Prov 8:22, the notion of Jesus as the “first of the creatures” is excluded by statements elsewhere in Revelation (*Apocalypse*, 59).

²⁸³ Burney, “Christ as APXH,” 160, 177. Aune likewise argues that this imagery depicts Christ as existing temporally prior to the first creation (*Revelation*, 1.256-257).

as a “tool” used by God.²⁸⁴ Despite these arguments, another explanation is possible, and more likely, in light of the connection noted above with Isa 65. In addition to the possible influence of the Hebrew text of Isa 65:16 in the phrase ὁ ἀμήν, Isa 65:17 gives the promise of a new creation. If Isa 65 does lie behind the use of these titles in Rev 3, it is likely that John is drawing attention to Jesus as the one bringing about the new creation, a topic that forms a significant portion of the final chapters of Revelation.²⁸⁵ Such an interpretation does not exclude the notion of the pre-existence of Jesus elsewhere in Revelation,²⁸⁶ but it does suggest that John is not employing a form of “wisdom” Christology in this text.²⁸⁷ The use, then, of ὁ ἀμήν may be seen as another example of an image used of God in the Old Testament that is applied to Jesus in Revelation.²⁸⁸

Revelation 5

Lion of Judah

The image of the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” occurs once in the book of Revelation in 5:5.²⁸⁹ Here, Jesus is identified as the “lion of the tribe of Judah” by one of the twenty-four elders. Within the narrative of Rev 5, the announcement of the “lion” is met by the appearance of a “lamb.” Some have argued that the image of the “lamb” replaces the image of the “lion” in this passage,²⁹⁰ but it seems more likely that the

²⁸⁴ Silberman, “Farewell,” 213-214. The intervening “faithful and true” (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός) would then be drawn from Prov 14:25. This reading depends, as noted earlier, on a mistranslation of יְהוָה.

²⁸⁵ For a discussion of this imagery, see Beale, *Revelation*, 297-301. ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός could be understood in this way as an interpretive expansion of ὁ ἀμήν. See also G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 204.

²⁸⁶ The collection of titles used of Jesus (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ in 22:13; ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος in 1:17; 2:8; 22:13; and ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος in 22:13), although likely carrying notions of sovereignty, may also be seen as indicating the pre-existence of Jesus.

²⁸⁷ Contra Murphy, *Fallen*, 160. The use of ἀρχή, then, would suggest that Jesus plays a key role in bringing about this new creation. See Beale, *Revelation*, 298-300. The notion of pre-eminence, noted by some scholars, would not be excluded. See Hughes, *Revelation*, 64; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 60.

²⁸⁸ See Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 137-140.

²⁸⁹ Lion imagery may be found elsewhere in Revelation as it is used of one of the four living creatures (4:7), the teeth of the locusts from the Abyss (9:8); the heads of the horses (9:17); the voice of an angel (10:3); and the mouth of the beast from the sea (13:2).

²⁹⁰ See Sweet, *Revelation*, 125; Caird, *Revelation*, 74-75.

two are to be maintained together, with the “lamb” qualifying the image of the “lion.”²⁹¹

The lion imagery is applied to the nation or to significant leaders in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature²⁹² and is also used as an image of God,²⁹³ but the particular association of the “lion” with the tribe of Judah here likely arises from its usage in Gen 49:9.²⁹⁴ Though the image there is applied to the tribe of Judah as a whole, the expectation arose for a leader from this tribe and was connected with messianic expectation by the first century C.E.²⁹⁵

The use in Revelation, though possibly leaning upon depictions of God as a lion-like warrior,²⁹⁶ most likely should be seen as reflecting messianic expectations. John’s identification of Jesus as the “lion” affirms the identification of Jesus as messiah, but the juxtaposition of this image with that of the Lamb in Rev 5:5-6 suggests an important qualification by John. The triumph of this “lion” is due to his sacrifice as a “lamb.”

Davidic Imagery

Within the same announcement of Jesus as the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah” is the association of Jesus with David (5:5), a relationship that appears elsewhere in Revelation (3:7; 22:16).²⁹⁷ Several Old Testament texts have influenced the

²⁹¹ So Witherington, *Revelation*, 120; Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon*, 193; Beale, *Revelation*, 352-353; Mounce, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 68. Guthrie notes a connection between “lion” and “lamb” imagery in the Greek text of *T. Jos.* 19:8-9 (“Christology,” 401), but this section likely contains Christian interpolation. Within the narrative, the appearance of the Lamb is surprising since a “lion” had been announced by one of the twenty-four elders. See Koester, *Revelation*, 78; Knight, *Revelation*, 64; J. D. Charles, “Apocalyptic Tribute,” 466. Gieschen also draws attention to the surprise of finding a “lamb” rather than a human figure (“The Lamb (Not the Man) on the Divine Throne,” 227). For the various approaches to this issue, see Skaggs and Doyle, “Lion/Lamb,” 362-375.

²⁹² Num 23:23; 24:9 (of the nation); Mic 5:7 (the remnant of Jacob); Ezek 19 (the leaders of Judah); 1 Macc 3:1-4 (Judas Maccabeus).

²⁹³ See Amos 1:2; 3:8, where the voice of the Lord is described as the roaring of a lion. See also Job 10:16; Isa 31:4; Jer 50:44; Hos 5:14.

²⁹⁴ So Mounce, *Revelation*, 131; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 77; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 140; Beale, *Revelation*, 349; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 80; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 132; Ford, *Revelation*, 86.

²⁹⁵ See *T. Jud.* 24; 4 *Ezra* 11:36-46 (interpreted in 12:31-34). Beale also notes occurrences in *Tg. Neof.* and *Tg. Ps.-J.* of Gen. 49:9-12 and in 1QSb 5.21-29 (*Revelation*, 349).

²⁹⁶ So G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 253.

²⁹⁷ References to Jesus as “king” and “lord” will be considered in the following section.

language John uses.²⁹⁸ In 3:7 Jesus is said to hold the “key of David,” which is likely an allusion to Isa 22:22.²⁹⁹ In this passage, Eliakim son of Hilkiah is said to be given the “key to the house of David.”³⁰⁰ Though Eliakim’s role was one of political influence in the royal household, the analogy is extended in Revelation and applied to Jesus as a Davidic descendent (see below on 5:5 and 22:16).³⁰¹ This image presents Jesus as the one in control of the household and throne of David.³⁰²

In Rev 5:5, Jesus is identified by one of the twenty-four elders as the “root of David” (ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ). This motif occurs again in 22:16, where Jesus speaks of himself as the “root and offspring of David” (ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ). This reference is likely derived from the imagery of Isa 11:1,³⁰³ which describes a “shoot” coming up from the root of Jesse³⁰⁴ and a “branch” from its roots.³⁰⁵ One of the issues in Revelation’s use of ῥίζα here is whether it suggests the preexistence of Jesus, in whom the Davidic line ultimately finds its source.³⁰⁶ Others, however, have argued that both ῥίζα and γένος identify Jesus as the promised descendent in the

²⁹⁸ Early Christian traditions outside Revelation also make use of this imagery, as will be explored in the following chapter.

²⁹⁹ So Aune, *Revelation*, 1:235; Beale, *Revelation*, 283; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 187; Caird, *Revelation*, 51; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 53; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 130-132; Matthewson, “Isaiah in Revelation,” 192-193. Murphy and Smalley connect this with the notion of “messianic authority.” See Murphy, *Fallen*, 151 and Smalley, *Revelation*, 88.

³⁰⁰ The reference in Revelation corresponds more closely to the Hebrew text (מִפְתֵּי בֵּית דָּוִד) than the LXX, where Eliakim receives the “glory of David” (τὴν δόξαν Δαυίδ). So R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1:86.

³⁰¹ Beale argues that this functions as an “indirect typological prophecy” (see *Revelation*, 284). Fekkes notes that, although examples have not been found of Jewish interpretations of this text as messianic, it nevertheless could be understood in this fashion (*Isaiah*, 131). On Eliakim, see Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:114-116.

³⁰² Beale, *Revelation*, 284-285; Mounce, *Revelation*, 100. This would likely also include spiritual authority over entrance into the kingdom of God. See A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 86; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 187-188; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.86.

³⁰³ So Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 80; Ladd, *Revelation*, 83; Murphy, *Fallen*, 192; Smalley, *Revelation*, 130; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 77; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.219; Beale, *Revelation*, 1146-1147; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 254; Matthewson, “Isaiah,” 191. Similar imagery may also be found in Jer 23:5.

³⁰⁴ LXX: ῥάβδος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης ἑσσαι. MT: חֹמֶר מִנֶּזֶעַ שִׁי. John appears to be following the reading in the LXX here. See also Isa 11:10 (LXX: ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ ἑσσαι. MT: שִׁשְׁרֵשׁ).

³⁰⁵ LXX: ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης. MT: נֶצֶר מִשְׁרֵשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

³⁰⁶ The use of γένος in 22:16 would indicate that Jesus is both the origin and the descendent of the Davidic line. See Hughes, *Revelation*, 239; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 309-310; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.219.

Davidic line.³⁰⁷ The semantic range of ῥίζα is broad enough to include the idea of “shoot,”³⁰⁸ so there does not appear to be enough evidence to establish the notion of preexistence in these two verses alone.³⁰⁹

In 3:7, 5:5, and 22:16, then, John identifies Jesus as the descendent of David using phrases from the book of Isaiah. In light of Jewish³¹⁰ and Christian³¹¹ usage elsewhere, John here is apparently drawing from common themes. As in the case of the “lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5), John is identifying Jesus as the promised messiah and as the heir to the Davidic throne.³¹²

Revelation 7

The text in Rev 7 depicts those who have come out of the great tribulation standing before the throne.³¹³ In addition to the depiction of worship directed toward God and the Lamb (7:9-10), John also uses the motif of the Lamb shepherding the people and leading them to springs of living water (7:17). This image is likely drawn from Isa 49:9-10, where God is the shepherd who leads the people and brings them to springs of water.³¹⁴ Similar imagery is used of God in Ps 23, which may have served a

³⁰⁷ The γένος in 22:16 would serve to further explain ῥίζα. So Beale, *Revelation*, 1146-1147; Mounce, *Revelation*, 131; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 793; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 152.

³⁰⁸ BDAG, 906; Louw and Nida, 1.116. It also appears to be used in this fashion in Isa 11:10 (LXX).

³⁰⁹ So Beale, *Revelation*, 1146-1147. This is not to suggest, however, that John does not reflect this elsewhere in Revelation.

³¹⁰ See *Ps. Sol.* 17:21ff; 4Q252 5:1-3; 4Q285 5:1-4; *T. Jud.* 24:4-6; Sir 47:22; 4 *Ezra* 12:32; *Tg. Isa.* 11:1, 10. See Mounce “Worthy is the Lamb,” 68; and id., *Revelation*, 131; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.350-351.

³¹¹ See Rom 15:12; cf. also Matt 1:1, 6; 22:42-45; Mark 11:10; 12:35-37; Luke 1:32, 69; 3:31; 20:41-44; John 7:42; Acts 2:30-36; 13:22-23, 34; 15:16; Rom 1:1-4; 2 Tim 2:8; Justin, *1 Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 86. Beale notes that in most associations of Jesus and David in the NT there are “usually discernable prophetic, messianic overtones” (*Revelation*, 284). Aune notes that Matt 16:19 may also allude to Isaiah 22:22 (*Revelation*, 1:235; see also Swete, *Apocalypse*, 54). For “offspring” of David, see Ign. *Eph* 20:2; *Trall.* 9:1; *Smyrn.* 1:1 (Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1226).

³¹² So Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 153.

³¹³ The imagery of the “white robes” may also be found in 3:5 and 6:11, and it likely functions as a symbol of purity in Revelation. It could also symbolize victory (Beale, *Revelation*, 278). The palm branches could reflect the Feast of Tabernacles, but they also functioned as a symbol of victory in the larger Greco-Roman context (see Aune, *Revelation*, 2.468-469). Although these function as symbols in relationship to the people of God, they indicate that the scene in 7:9-17 is one of celebration for the redemption secured by God and the Lamb.

³¹⁴ So Beale, *Revelation*, 442. The designation of Jesus as “shepherd” may also be seen in a number of early Christian texts, as will be explored in the following chapter.

secondary role in influencing the imagery here in Revelation.³¹⁵ There are likely divine overtones in John's employment of this motif, especially in light of the probable allusion to Isa 49:9-10, but 7:17 may also allude to descriptions of the Davidic leadership of God's people.³¹⁶

Lord, King, and Christ

The terms "lord," "king," and "Christ" are used to describe Jesus in Revelation. Here again it is evident that John borrows Old Testament themes for his purposes.

The term κύριος is applied to both God and Jesus in Revelation, with the greater number of occurrences referring to God (1:8; 4:8, 11; 11:4, 15, 17; 15:3, 4; 16:7; 18:8; 19:6; 22:5, 6).³¹⁷ In seven of the thirteen occurrences used with respect to God the formula (or some variation thereof) κύριος ὁ θεός ὁ παντοκράτωρ is used (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22). The term κύριος is also used on its own to refer to Jesus (11:8) and in combination with the name "Jesus" (22:20, 21).³¹⁸ One final noteworthy example is the formula used in 17:14 and 19:16: κύριος κυρίων.

In these two texts, κύριος κυρίων is paired with βασιλεὺς βασιλέων.³¹⁹ These phrases may be found in contexts where Jesus' kingship is asserted over against that of the beast. Some have argued that these titles should be seen as arising from Babylonian/Persian usage,³²⁰ but it is more probable that John has made use of

³¹⁵ See Beale, *Revelation*, 442; Aune, *Revelation*, 3.478.

³¹⁶ See Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-28. Cf. also 2 Sam 7:7; Jer 3:15.

³¹⁷ So noted by Morris, *Revelation*, 50.

³¹⁸ 14:13 is unclear, but, given other early Christian usage (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14), it seems likely that this refers to Jesus as well. Although the application of κύριος to both Jesus and God may serve to illustrate a relationship between the two (and particularly in light of the other titles shared in Revelation), κύριος is used by John to address the angel in 7:14. The use of κύριος κυρίων, as will be seen, exhibits significant connections with certain Old Testament texts used to refer to God.

³¹⁹ The description of the title's location in 19:16 probably indicates that the title was written on the part of the garment that fell on the thigh (with the καὶ ἐπὶ μηρὸν αὐτοῦ functioning as exegetical). The location also reflects Greco-Roman inscriptional practice. See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.1062; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 686; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.137.

³²⁰ See the discussion in Deissmann, *Licht*, 298-311. Griffiths provides a good survey of the evidence for the use of this title in the ancient world. See J. Gwyn Griffiths, "Basileus Basilewn: Remarks on the History of a Title," *CP* 48 (1953): 145-154. Skehan suggests that the use of these titles may also serve as a contrast to "666," as the letters, when converted into Aramiac, add up to 777 (Patrick W. Skehan, "King of Kings, Lord of Lords (Apoc. 19:16)," *CBQ* 10 (1948): 398). Although the theme of kingship does serve to contrast the authority of the beast, this suggestion is too speculative.

expressions in the Old Testament and in the Second Temple Jewish writings, particularly as reflected in the LXX.³²¹ Beale argues that this should be seen as coming from Dan 4:37 (LXX), where Nebuchadnezzar describes God as the “God of gods,” “Lord of lords,” and “King of kings.”³²²

More than simply receiving the title βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, Jesus is portrayed as royal through the use of various images in Revelation. Christians are portrayed as a kingdom, purchased with his blood (1:6; 5:10). God and Jesus are shown as participating in the rule over the world (1:9; 11:15; 12:10).³²³ This kingship is likewise bestowed upon the followers of the Lamb, despite the actions of the beast (5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5) or the actions of Satan (12:10). The title given to Jesus in 1:5, “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” is likely drawn from Ps 89:27 (LXX 88:28) and reflects the association of Jesus with the Davidic throne.³²⁴

The terms “lord” and “king” also establish a platform for John to speak of Jesus ruling with an iron rod (ῥάβδος σιδηρά). The theme is employed in 12:5 and 19:15, and in 2:26-28 this authority is extended to the overcomers. The imagery of ruling with an iron rod is drawn from Ps 2:9, where the anointed one is given authority over the nations.³²⁵ John incorporates the motif from Ps 2:9 into the wider imagery of Jesus as king with the overcomers sharing in his reign.

The use of the term χριστός also reflects this motif of kingship in Revelation. In addition to the occurrences of ὁ χριστός with Ἰησοῦς (1:1, 2, 5), it appears independently four times in Revelation (11:15; 12:10; 20:4; and 20:6). In his essay on this expression, de Jonge has argued that it is used to refer to the future

³²¹ In some cases, the title βασιλεὺς βασιλέων is applied to rulers. See Dan 2:37; 3:2 (LXX); Ezek 26:7; Ezra 7:12. Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων was also applied to God in Dan 4:37 (LXX); 2 Macc 13:4; 3 Macc 5:35. In the LXX, κύριος κυρίων occurs in Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3 (LXX 135:3), 26 (LXX 135:26); and Dan 4:37 (LXX). In each instance, the phrase is applied to God. The related θεὸς θεῶν may also be found in Deut 10:17; Pss 50:1 (LXX 49:1); 84:8 (LXX 83:8); 136:2 (LXX 135:2); Dan 2:47 (LXX, with κύριος τῶν βασιλέων); 3:90 (LXX); 3:26 (LXX 3:93); 4:37 (LXX); 11:36. Cf. also *1 En.* 9.4.

³²² See G. K. Beale, “The Origin of the Title ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ in Revelation 17:14,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 618-620. Slater follows a similar approach (T. B. Slater, “‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ Revisited,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 159-160).

³²³ The motif of God as “king” may be found in a variety of Old Testament passages. See, for example, Exod 15:18; Ps 10:16; 29:10; 66:7; 145:1; 146:10; Isa 52:7; Jer 10:10; Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27; Mic 4:7; cf. also Jauhainen, *Zechariah*, 124.

³²⁴ So Mounce, *Revelation*, 49.

³²⁵ See Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 67.

reign of the Lord's Anointed.³²⁶ Where the title occurs independently, it is accompanied by references to "kingdom" (βασιλεία; 11:15; 12:10) or "reigning" (βασιλεύω; 11:15; 20:4, 6). As a title, it appears likely that the imagery here is taken from Ps 2:2, a Psalm that has been utilized elsewhere in Revelation (cf. Rev 2:13, 18, 26-27; 12:5; 19:15).³²⁷ For John, this title reflects patterns of kingly, messianic expectation.³²⁸

John appears, then, to draw from traditions regarding kingship, and especially Davidic kingship, in the Old Testament. In his use of these motifs in Revelation, John associates Jesus and God (see 1:9; 3:21; 11:15; 12:10; 22:3). This language alone may not carry divine overtones, but his use of βασιλεὺς βασιλέων and κύριος κυρίων suggests an application to Jesus of titles used for God in the Old Testament.

Revelation 20-22

Within the closing chapters of Revelation, there is still more imagery used of Jesus that alludes to the Old Testament writings. We must consider here a pair of references that exhibit connections with imagery from Isaiah. First, in 21:23, John describes the illumination of the New Jerusalem. Rather than the light of the sun, the city is illuminated by the "glory of God" as its light and the Lamb as its lamp.³²⁹ This imagery is likely drawn from Isa 60:19, which describes the glory and illumination of Zion.³³⁰ In the case of Rev 21:23, it appears that John is utilizing the imagery from Isaiah to illustrate the shared role of illuminating the New Jerusalem.³³¹

³²⁶ de Jonge, "ὁ χριστός," 267-281.

³²⁷ See Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 218.

³²⁸ This may be found in other Second Temple Jewish texts, such as *Ps. Sol.* 17 and *I En.* 48:10. See de Jonge, "ὁ χριστός," 279. Comblin notes that this pattern can be seen as inspired by the Old Testament more broadly and suggests that texts such as Isa 60:1 may be in mind as well (*Le Christ*, 178).

³²⁹ ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἄρνιον.

³³⁰ Here, the Lord is said to be the light, and God is said to be their glory (Isa 60:19).

³³¹ The distinction between the "lamp" and "light" is likely rhetorical, not theological. See Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 268; Hofius, "Das Zeugnis," 522; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2.171-172.

Second, the declaration given by Jesus in 22:12 likely reflects statements from Isaiah used in reference to God. In Rev 22, Jesus affirms that his reward is with him.³³² Isa 40:10 bears close resemblance to this statement, as the author notes that God brings his reward with him for the benefit of his people.³³³ This phrasing represents another instance where John depicts Jesus through imagery of God borrowed from the Old Testament writings.³³⁴

Summary

These minor images and themes that occur infrequently throughout Revelation contribute to the overall picture of Jesus. In comparison with John's major themes and images discussed in the first part of this chapter, these images which occur less frequently show a similar style of engagement with important Old Testament concepts and language. John employs a variety of texts and images throughout these chapters, and, as the preceding survey has indicated, he demonstrates a wide-ranging interest in utilizing Old Testament imagery and phrasing in the depiction of Jesus. These themes and images, despite occurring infrequently, nevertheless contribute to John's overall portrayal of Jesus.

Summary and Evaluation

The discussion of the chapter thus far has indicated that the Old Testament writings played a significant role in John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation. Major themes, such as the Lamb and the heavenly throne-room, and minor themes, such as the "root of David" and the "faithful witness," alike indicate a dependence upon the Old Testament as a source for John's imagery and phrasing. In this final section, we turn to a synthesis of the role that the Old Testament and Jewish writings of the Second Temple period played in Revelation. First, we will take up the concern of the relationship between John, his readers, and the Old Testament. Next, I will offer an evaluation of the general patterns present in John's use of the Old Testament in his depiction of Jesus.

³³² ὁ μισθὸς μου μετ' ἐμοῦ.

³³³ Isa 40:10 (LXX): ἰδοὺ ὁ μισθὸς αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ.

³³⁴ Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 276-278.

John, the Old Testament, and His Readers

As may be seen from the preceding discussion, a number of connections can be made between the imagery used of Jesus in Revelation and a wide variety of Old Testament texts. As it appears that John was writing to congregations known by him (and he, in turn, was known by them),³³⁵ it seems reasonable to believe that John would have possessed an awareness of his readers' knowledge of the Old Testament writings.³³⁶ Given the high number of potential connections with images and phrases from the Old Testament within Revelation, it appears that John expects his readers to regard his presentation of Jesus as consistent with this wider religious heritage.³³⁷

Though some images, such as "king" and "witness" may evoke certain meanings on their own, others lack meaning apart from referents outside the world of the text. Certain phrases such as the "lion of the tribe of Judah," the "key of David," and the "song of Moses," for example, clearly allude to key Old Testament traditions. In addition, texts such as Dan 7 and 10 (cf. Rev 1:7, 13-16; 4-5), Ezek 1 (cf. Rev 1:15; 4:1, 3, 6-7), Ps 2 (cf. Rev 2:13, 18, 26-27; 12:5; 19:15), and Isa 11 (cf. Rev 1:16; 2:12; 5:5; 19:15; 22:16) play a significant role in John's depiction of Jesus throughout Revelation. It is reasonable to assume that John expected his readers to identify such allusions in his presentation of Jesus.

Once one moves beyond key images and frequently used texts, it becomes more difficult to determine the degree to which John would have expected his readers to recognize the various allusions to Old Testament writings. Part of this difficulty stems from the manner in which John utilizes the Old Testament. As already noted at the outset of this chapter, John does not quote from Old Testament writings in the same manner as other New Testament authors. In some cases, only a word or two provides a verbal or conceptual link with an Old Testament passage.

³³⁵ I will provide further evidence and discussion of this relationship in chapter four. But for now it should suffice to say that details in the text of Revelation indicate a specific set of recipients (1:11; 2:1-3:22) and an author who can introduce himself merely by name (1:9).

³³⁶ This is not to say that all readers would approach the text with the same degree of familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures or that readers would have the same access to copies of the Bible or advanced searching tools that we have today. For Jewish Christians in these congregations, some elements present in John's description of Jesus may have been familiar due to their religious heritage. For readers who may have lacked familiarity with the Old Testament writings, the images and themes in Revelation still create a coherent literary work. Despite the numerous connections with Old Testament texts, it does not appear that John has crafted the book solely for readers with a high degree of "biblical literacy." See Beale, *John's Use*, 69-70.

³³⁷ Beale, *John's Use*, 69-70.

The tie between the image in Revelation and the Old Testament passage, however, may be strengthened by wider thematic considerations in the surrounding context.³³⁸ The reading of the text (1:3) in the local congregations may have provided the occasion for the identification of such allusions for those less familiar with the Old Testament writings.³³⁹ Though some caution may be appropriate concerning the identification of allusions and echoes in other New Testament writings, John's unique method of incorporating imagery and phrasing from the Old Testament writings necessitates a different approach.³⁴⁰

Some of these features indicate that John has employed imagery from the Old Testament to impress upon his readers that his vision is in keeping with other prophetic visions in particular and with the Old Testament more broadly. The heavenly throne-room, in which the Lamb appears (Rev 4-5), is a composite of Old Testament scenes. The message which John receives, like Daniel in the Old Testament, comes from one clothed in the glory of heaven (1:12-20). This attempt to maintain a high degree of continuity between his writing and these Old Testament writings may relate to his apparent status as a Christian prophet.³⁴¹ The employment of various images and themes from the Old Testament in his depiction of Jesus suggests that John views his religious convictions about Jesus as consistent with those expressed in the Old Testament writings.

In light of these considerations, it appears that John has high expectations of his readers regarding the identification of imagery and phrasing from the Old Testament writings in his depiction of Jesus. The extent to which John's readers would have been able to appreciate these allusions likely varied, but it appears that he expected his readers to identify this literary and theological relationship.

³³⁸ The example of the description of the head and hair described in 1:14 serves as an example of this. While the imagery could be considered simply a part of the wider vocabulary used to describe a heavenly being, the connections with Dan 7 through the use of the "one like a son of man" language suggest that John is portraying Jesus as having a feature connected with the Ancient of Days in Daniel. The employment of imagery elsewhere from Daniel, and from Daniel 7 in particular, suggests that this association is likely.

³³⁹ See Beale, *John's Use*, 70. Bauckham suggests that other Christian prophets may have served in this role (*Climax*, 86).

³⁴⁰ As Jauhiainen notes, "...without knowledge of the OT, Revelation would make much less sense" (*Zechariah*, 9).

³⁴¹ See Bauckham, *Climax*, 84-91; Beale, *John's Use*, 70; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgement*, 140; A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 49. We will consider this role more carefully in the following chapter.

The Old Testament and John's Presentation of Jesus

Throughout this chapter, I have offered evidence of the various ways in which John draws imagery and phrasing from the Old Testament writings in his depiction of Jesus in Revelation. The main discussion within the chapter thus far has focused upon these instances independently. In this final section I will provide an appraisal of the interplay within Revelation.

In some cases, John employs Old Testament themes in a manner consistent with other Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts. John has created, in this way, a depiction of a messianic figure that bears similarity to those depicted in other writings of the day. This figure is in the line of David, rules as a king, and brings victory to God's people and defeat to God's enemies.³⁴² As noted above, imagery from texts such as Isa 11, Num 24, and Ps 2 was interpreted messianically in other Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts. We also see notions of a messianic figure in the line of David in a number of these texts.³⁴³ The use of these images and themes suggests that the book of Revelation can be situated within the context of Jewish and Christian messianic thought during the first century C.E.³⁴⁴

John's depiction of Jesus demonstrates elements in common with these patterns of messianic expectation, but he has also employed imagery and phrasing from Old Testament writings with a high degree of freedom and creativity.³⁴⁵ First,

³⁴² *Ps Sol* 17 may serve as an example in this regard, as the psalm brings together a number of similar concepts found also in Revelation. These include Davidic imagery (17:4, 6, 21; cf. Rev. 3:7; 5:5; 22:16), the "shattering" of the wicked with an "iron rod" (17:24; cf. Rev 2:26-28; 12:5; 19:15) and with the word of his mouth (17:24, 35; cf. Rev 1:16; 2:12; 19:15), the designation as "messiah" (17:32; cf. Rev 11:15; 12:10; 20:4; and 20:6); and shepherding the flock of God (17:40; cf. Rev 7:17).

³⁴³ See *Ps. Sol.* 17:21ff; 4Q252 5:1-3; 4Q285 5:1-4; *T. Jud.* 24:4-6; *Sir* 47:22; *4 Ezra* 12:32; *Tg. Isa.* 11:1, 10. See Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 76.

³⁴⁴ For some scholars, the presence of this imagery in Revelation and its similarity to other Jewish writings suggest that the book of Revelation is essentially Jewish, not Christian, at its core (see Edwards, "Christological Perspectives," 148; Ford, *Revelation*, 12-18). Within the next two chapters, I will offer evidence indicating the "Christian" character of John's convictions as expressed throughout the book of Revelation.

³⁴⁵ As noted earlier, the discussion regarding John's use of the Old Testament has varied from those who argue that John is attentive to the Old Testament context (i.e. Beale) and to those who argue that John is merely drawing from a bank of images and language from the Old Testament (i.e. Fiorenza), with some who argue for a more moderate position (i.e. Moyise). The description of John's use as "creative" here seeks to provide a way of assessing John's employment of Old Testament themes in the situations where a clear Old Testament context is not in view. In some cases, this "creativity" comes to light in comparison with the Old Testament text or in comparison with other early Christian documents. Swete notes, "There is not a single instance in which the Christian prophet of the Apocalypse has contented himself with a mere compilation or combination of Old Testament ideas. His handling of these materials is always original and independent, and he does not allow his Old

in this regard, one may consider his creation of composite images. In the depiction of the rider on the white horse of Rev 19, John has incorporated imagery from a variety of Old Testament contexts, such as divine warrior imagery, Exodus imagery (likely as interpreted in Wis 18), Davidic imagery, and priestly imagery. John has also incorporated Old Testament imagery that reflects portrayals of God.³⁴⁶ This imagery has been drawn, in particular, from Old Testament texts such as Isaiah, Psalms, Zechariah, and Daniel. Certain themes and titles, such as the combination of texts noted in the previous section, do demonstrate similarities to patterns of expectation within Second Temple Judaism. Nevertheless, John has crafted a description within Rev 19 that may be identified as truly his own. This overall portrait exhibits a creative combination of texts and concepts.

The three titles of the “faithful witness,” the “firstborn of the dead,” and the “ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5) may serve as another example of this creativity. As argued above, the description of Jesus as the “faithful witness” (1:5) has likely been taken from Ps 89:37 (LXX 88:38).³⁴⁷ In its original context, the statement refers to the perpetuation of the Davidic throne. The emphasis upon Jesus as a king is present in Rev 1:5 as Jesus is the “ruler of the kings of the earth,” but John has transformed the idea of “witness” and incorporated it within the larger theme of “witness” throughout the book (see 1:2, 5, 9; 2:13; 3:14; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4; 22:16, 20).³⁴⁸ In 1:5, Jesus himself, rather than the throne, bears witness to God’s faithfulness and is the model witness (1:5; 2:13; 3:14) for his followers who likewise bear witness (6:9; 12:11, 17; 17:6; 20:4).³⁴⁹ John’s use of the term πρωτότοκος demonstrates similar adaptation as he has also modified the imagery from Ps 89. In Ps 89:27 (LXX 88:28) πρωτότοκος expresses the place of privilege to which God exalts David. In Rev 1:5, the addition of the phrase τῶν νεκρῶν modifies the imagery to connect it with Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. In 1:5,

Testament author to carry him a step beyond the point at which the guidance ceases to lend itself to the purpose of his book” (*Apocalypse*, cliii).

³⁴⁶ Slater notes the images of leading the heavenly host, treading the winepress in wrath, and being “Lord” and “King” (*Christ and Community*, 235). See also Söding, “Gott und Lamm,” 98.

³⁴⁷ So R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.14; Swete, *Apocalypse*, 6-7.

³⁴⁸ See Moyise, *Old Testament*, 116-118. Moyise notes possible meanings of this juxtaposition of imagery in Revelation and the subsequent effect that this would then have on readers of Ps 89.

³⁴⁹ So G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 62.

John has adapted imagery from Ps 89 and has connected it with the themes of “witness,” the death and resurrection of Jesus, and kingship in Revelation.³⁵⁰

Finally, as it relates to the use of divine titles from the Old Testament, John demonstrates similar creativity. He adopts, for example, the statement in Isa 44:6 (LXX: ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα; cf. Isa 41:4; 48:12). Within Isaiah, this declaration functions as an assertion of God’s uniqueness over against the idols of the nations.³⁵¹ John expands this assertion into a set of closely related titles (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ (1:8; 21:6; 22:13), ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (21:6; 22:13), and ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος (1:17; 2:8; 22:13)) and uses these titles to identify both Jesus (1:17; 2:8; 22:13) and God (1:8; 21:6) within Revelation.³⁵² In this example, John not only applies a divine self-declaration from the Old Testament to Jesus but also provides a unique modification of this imagery.

John’s use of the Old Testament in his depiction of Jesus, then, is varied. In some cases, the application of Old Testament imagery is largely in keeping with early Christian convictions and Second Temple Jewish expectation. In other cases, John shows a high degree of freedom and creativity in his use of Old Testament images, phrases, and motifs. This diversity, both in terms of source-text and employment in Revelation, suggests a complex engagement with these Old Testament writings. John’s use of certain materials can be evaluated as “messianic” in his exegesis,³⁵³ but he moves beyond this category. John combines various Old Testament motifs and incorporates images used of God in the Old Testament in unique ways to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and the “One seated on the throne.”

The above discussion has indicated that studies positing a connection between John’s presentation of Jesus and various Old Testament texts can be sustained. It appears that the Old Testament has served as a significant, if not the most significant, source for the language which John employs. Within this chapter and the previous one, then, I have argued that the writings of the Old Testament and imagery associated with Roman Emperor worship served as major sources for John’s

³⁵⁰ On this, see Herghelegiu, *Siehe, er kommt*, 224.

³⁵¹ Cf. Isa 41:7, 21-24; 42:8-9, 17; 44:6-20; 45:16, 20; 46:5-7; 48:14.

³⁵² The significance of this pattern will be explored further in chapter five.

³⁵³ So Hultberg, “Messianic Exegesis.”

depiction of Jesus in Revelation. The mere combination of these two sources, however, cannot fully explain the language and imagery found in Revelation. Within the next chapter, then, we will discuss the third major context, early Christianity itself.

CHAPTER FOUR:

JOHN, JESUS, AND THE CONTEXT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Within the previous two chapters, the contexts of Roman emperor worship and the Old Testament writings have been considered as primary sources for the imagery utilized in John's depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Within the present chapter, the third major context, early Christianity itself, will be explored.¹ The concern of the present chapter is twofold. First, what presuppositions does John appear to share with his readers upon which he builds his discussion of Jesus? Second, what use, if any, does John make of early Christian traditions, particularly with regard to those reflected in other early Christian texts? Within this chapter, I will attempt to situate the book of Revelation within the context of early Christianity with a view towards John's readership in Asia Minor.

In chapter three we briefly observed indications within the text that John and the recipients of the book of Revelation were known to one another.² Given this relationship, it is likely that elements of John's depiction of Jesus reflect the shared knowledge and experiences between John and his readers. Despite this, studies on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation have given only limited consideration to this question. Slater's *Christ and Community* is a notable exception in this regard, as it investigates the depiction of Jesus with respect to the pastoral needs of the seven congregations. Slater's concern, however, is with the way in which John's depiction of Jesus would have served to encourage believers, not with the way in which shared Christian conviction may have shaped John's depiction of Jesus. In fact, there have

¹ Since it is likely that Revelation was written in the second half of the 1st century C.E., sufficient time had elapsed for the development of certain elements of a "Christian" religious vocabulary. Key texts from the Hebrew Scriptures may be identified as providing the language and imagery used by John, but the choice of these particular themes may be due to wider Christian usage rather than the author's independent reflection upon these texts. As a result, it may be difficult to separate neatly references based upon the author's independent interaction with Old Testament texts and those derived from early Christian usage. Such an exploration, however, does serve to situate the book of Revelation within the wider spectrum of early Christian literature.

² Although the subsequent readership may be the church more broadly, the original readers are identified as the seven congregations noted in 1:11 and in chapters two and three.

been several notable studies that have attempted to explore the history and culture of the seven cities in order to elucidate the imagery employed by John in Rev 2-3.³ Studies such as these attempt to shed light on particular local emphases in the messages to the seven churches but fail to posit the requisite sharing of presuppositions between John and his readers.

Although certain elements in Revelation are likely unique to John, John and his readers share convictions that enable effective communication to occur.⁴ Such a list of convictions is necessarily provisional, as we have access only to John's side of the communication.⁵ John may be attempting, by emphasizing certain aspects, to correct, reinforce, or challenge convictions held by his readers. It appears, however, with regard to various concepts and images in Revelation, that John draws upon shared convictions.

We will explore thematically in this chapter the possible presuppositions shared by John and his readers. Although much more could be said with regard to these shared presuppositions, I will focus primarily upon those which may be considered "religious" in nature and which deal chiefly with Jesus. Before moving to consider these more carefully, I will provide evidence to substantiate a relationship between John and his readers that would allow for such presuppositions. The first major section will explore details in the text indicating John's knowledge of his

³ See Ramsay, *Letters*; Hemer, *Letters*.

⁴ Although there have been tendencies within modern literary criticism to minimize the importance of such a question, written communication presupposes the sharing of certain convictions in order for that communication to be effective. These shared presuppositions form an important component of the communication between John and his readers. Turner, in his essay "Historical Criticism and Theological Hermeneutics of the New Testament" helpfully distinguishes between psychological presuppositions and the shared "presuppositional pool" between author and reader (Max Turner, "Historical Criticism and Theological Hermeneutics of the New Testament," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 48, 50). Within this chapter, by "shared presupposition" I mean the convictions about God, Jesus, the world, etc. that we have reason to believe John and his readers likely knew or assumed the other to share. These shared religious convictions form the framework of religious discourse between John and his readers and may be situated within the wider religious landscape of early Christianity, as will be explored in this present chapter.

⁵ Beyond possible data gained through archaeological study, Asia Minor was an important location for the early Christian movement. Christians in these seven cities were likely familiar with other early Christian leaders and possibly with other early Christian writings as well. Even though one cannot conclusively prove from the text of Revelation that these Christians were familiar with any other particular early Christian texts, it is likely that Christians in these churches were familiar with teachings other than those associated with the author of Revelation. As a result, expressions in Revelation that bear a resemblance to those found in other early Christian writings may reflect this shared "presuppositional pool" from which John was able to draw.

readers, his self-presentation, and his role as an early Christian prophet. This will provide the warrant for considering further shared presuppositions within the text. Next, convictions concerning God, angels, and demons will be discussed in order to determine the broader religious framework shared between John and his readers. After this, in the final main section we will address the chief concern of the study at hand: John's presentation of Jesus. In this last section, potential references to the life and teachings of Jesus, early Christian titles used of Jesus, and Jesus-devotion will be explored.

John and His Churches

We can concede that aspects of the background of Revelation are debatable. However, the text itself contains a number of helpful details related to both the author and the recipients that are valuable to the present discussion. The level of detail in Revelation may not be as high as in some of the Pauline epistles, for example, but there are sufficient details to indicate basics of the relationship between author and recipients upon which one may propose a set of shared religious convictions. Within this section I will provide an assessment of these details.

First, as has often been noted, one feature of Revelation that stands as unique in comparison with other apocalyptic writings of the day is John's apparent use of his own name.⁶ Although there were other prominent individuals named John within the early church,⁷ the author of Revelation appears to have been sufficiently known by his readers, which allows him to refer to himself as merely "John." The author does utilize other descriptive phrases that serve to describe his role,⁸ but he does not

⁶ See, for example, *Apoc. Zeph.*; *4 Ezra*; *2 Bar.* Pseudonymous authorship is often viewed as a standard feature of this genre (see John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 6). Although one may suggest that Revelation is indeed pseudonymous, there does not appear to be an attempt to provide additional details to identify this writing with a particular John.

⁷ The most prominent individuals named John in the early church that one could associate with the book of Revelation are John the apostle (the son of Zebedee and brother of James), John the elder, and John the Baptist. A number in the early church viewed John the apostle as the author of Revelation (see Justin, *Dial.* 81; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.11; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.14; 3.24). Eusebius, based on a statement by Papias, attributed Revelation to "John the elder" (see *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.2-6). Ford's suggestion regarding John the Baptist as a primary source for material in Revelation, although intriguing, is ultimately unconvincing (*Revelation*, 3-42).

⁸ In addition to the statements regarding John's prophetic role, which will be explored in turn, John refers to himself as a "servant" (1:1; cf. 19:10; 22:9) and a "brother" and "companion in suffering" (1:9).

include elements that would necessarily serve to identify himself over against other men named “John” who were known in the early church. It seems best to conclude, then, that the author of Revelation was known to his readers and therefore did not need to include additional biographical details.⁹

Next, it appears that John was familiar with the congregations to which he wrote. John demonstrates an awareness of the difficulties facing the congregations and notes one individual, Antipas, by name (2:13). As John does not refer to his opponents by name, he assumes his readers will be able to identify appropriately the false apostles (2:2), the “Nicolaitans” (2:6, 15), those who hold to the teachings of “Balaam” (2:14), “Jezebel” (2:20), and those who call themselves Jews but are not (2:9; 3:9). It is likely, then, that John bases this assumption on his relationship with these congregations. It is unclear whether John exercised authority in any particular church or was associated with any particular congregation, but he seems to interact with specific situations facing each of the seven churches.¹⁰ In addition, it appears that Revelation was written for “insiders”; that is, John expects that his readers will share his particular viewpoint as a follower of Jesus. Although Revelation, as a text, may seek to persuade its readers to respond in a certain way,¹¹ it does so with the understanding that the readers share the same orientation as the author.¹² John assumes that his readers, in this way, will identify themselves with and as the followers of the Lamb.

The issue of the particular situation facing the Christians with respect to the Roman Empire has produced widely differing viewpoints,¹³ but it seems reasonable to conclude that Christians were likely experiencing local pressures and difficulties as a result of their exclusive commitment to Jesus, and so could reasonably expect to

⁹ So Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 177. Beyond this, it appears difficult to connect the author of Revelation conclusively with a well-known “John.”

¹⁰ If John is to be identified with “John the elder,” tradition would place him in Ephesus (see Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 3.39.2-6).

¹¹ On this see David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); and id., “The Strategic Arousal of Emotions in the Apocalypse of John: A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of the Oracles to the Seven Churches,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 90-114; and id., “What has Athens to Do with Patmos? Rhetorical Criticism of the Revelation of John (1980–2005),” *CBR* 6 (2008): 256-289.

¹² A reading of the text may indeed result in “outsiders” adjusting their convictions to align with those of the author, but it does not appear that this was the primary intent of the text.

¹³ On this, see Naylor, “Roman Imperial Cult,” 225-227.

experience future persecution.¹⁴ It appears, then, that John is representing himself as sharing in the difficulties faced by his readers (1:9).¹⁵ In addition, John uses a number of phrases and terms to refer to the Christians, such as “servants” (1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6), “brothers” (6:11; 12:10; 19:10; 22:9; cf. 1:9), and “saints” (5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9), and he refers to the local assemblies as “churches” (1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 22:16). He also identifies the Christian community as a worshipping community, joined by their professed allegiance to God and to his Christ and by their acts of devotion that express this relationship (5:9-14; 7:9-12). John seems to assume that they will share this assessment in their own self-understanding.¹⁶

In addition to these details in the text that suggest that John was writing to a specific set of churches in Asia Minor that were known to him, other details in the text also appear to presuppose certain things about his readers. These details relate to the type of communication present in the text, and, on their own, do not irrefutably confirm a relationship between John and his readers. Some of these expressions and presuppositions occur in other early Christian writings and could be understood simply as reflecting this general religious context. However, it makes best sense, given the specific way these are expressed in Revelation, that John is drawing upon his relationship with the seven churches. In these cases, the effectiveness of these expressions is contingent upon the relationship John shares with his readers.

First, although John does not directly identify himself as a “prophet,” there are a number of details within Revelation that identify the book as a prophetic writing.¹⁷ Beyond the vast number of verbal and thematic connections with Old

¹⁴ Apart from the reference to Antipas (2:13), it appears that the Christians in the area were not experiencing widespread persecution resulting in death yet. If Revelation was composed during the reign of Domitian, the letters of Pliny (see *Ep.* 96) during the reign of Trajan give indication of persecution arising within a short period of time. Although the references to the sources of opposition in chapters two and three do refer to internal sources of opposition, references to “outsiders” are largely negative and anticipate oppression and/or persecution.

¹⁵ Despite L. Thompson’s objections (see *Revelation*, 172-173), it is best to regard διὰ as expressing cause and not purpose. The reference to tribulation, the connection of John’s presence on Patmos with the “word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” and the later development of this theme (tribulation as a result of Christian witness) suggests that John was representing himself as sharing in the same pressures that these early Christian communities faced as a result of their devotion to Jesus.

¹⁶ It seems, in this regard, that John builds upon devotional practice of the readers in his depiction of worship in Revelation. This will be explored later in the present chapter.

¹⁷ See Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 178, 250-260; David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (New Foundations Theological Library; Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 70-75; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 136-151.

Testament prophetic writings, one of the descriptions used by John to describe his writing in Revelation is “prophecy” (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). He is instructed in 10:11 to “prophesy again” (δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι), with the implication in the narrative context that he is to carry on his prophetic activity, likely exemplified by the contents of the book. In addition to these references, he also mentions “the prophets” as a group (11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 19:10; 22:6, 9, 16).¹⁸ Although this may be a reference to the Old Testament prophets,¹⁹ it is likely, especially in 22:9 and 22:16, that this refers to other Christian prophets.²⁰ It seems as well that John’s opposition was attempting to exercise some sort of prophetic role.²¹ In light of these factors, it seems that he expected his readers to identify his work as prophecy and understand his role as that of a Christian prophet. As such, he expected his audience

¹⁸ “Prophets” are mentioned alongside “saints” and/or “apostles” in 11:18; 16:6; 18:20, 24. In each of these cases, the “prophets” are depicted as those who have suffered for their commitment to God and will receive their reward from God. In addition, the two witnesses of Rev 11 are described as “prophets” (11:3, 6, 10). Finally, John refers to the “spirit of prophets/prophecy” in 19:10 and 22:6.

¹⁹ In the case of 10:7, it is most likely that προφήτας refers to the Old Testament prophets. This statement bears similar conviction to that expressed in Rom 16:26. See Beale, *Revelation*, 543-544; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 79.

²⁰ In 22:9, the prophets are said to be John’s brothers (τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν). This may refer to John’s relationship to the Old Testament prophets (see A.Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 45), but it may also be read as referring to other Christian prophets associated with John (so G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 784; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 89). One of the main issues here is the phrase μαρτυρῆσαι ὑμῖν ταῦτα ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. The main interpretive question is whether the ὑμῖν here refers to Christians within the seven congregations or to other early prophets who may have served to communicate John’s message to the congregation. A. Y. Collins suggests that this should be read to as “to you (i.e. the churches) about the churches” (*Crisis and Catharsis*, 39). However, it is unlikely, given the grammar, that ὑμῖν and ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις share the same referent. As Aune notes, only chapters two and three can properly be said to be “about the churches” (*Apocalypticism*, 253). In light of these considerations and other references to “prophets” in Revelation, it seems plausible that John is referring here to early Christian prophets (so Aune, *Apocalypticism*, 251-255; contra A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 39). In similar fashion, 19:10 (cf. also 22:6), which connects the “testimony of Jesus” (ἡ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ) with the “spirit of prophecy” (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας), may also be seen as referring to the prophetic role of testifying to Jesus. Although not referring particularly to the office of an early Christian prophet, this statement makes explicit the connection between prophesying and bearing witness to Jesus (see Beale, *Revelation*, 947-948).

²¹ “Jezebel” appears to have played some role within the local congregation at Thyatira and viewed herself as a prophetess (2:20). The reference to “Jezebel” as a false prophetess suggests the presence of competing prophetic voices within the communities, and the depiction of the false teaching as that of “Balaam” at Pergamum (2:14) indicates a prophetic orientation (see A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 43-44). The figure of the beast from the land appears to function outside the Christian community, but it is still described as a “false prophet” in its role (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). In this case, John’s role as a prophet, in testifying to Jesus, may be seen as analogous to the role played by those seeking to advance emperor worship (on this, see Georgi, “True Prophet,” 123-124). Despite these characterizations of John’s opponents as “prophets,” this need not suggest that the conflict is solely due to competing prophetic voices within the community. References to false apostles (2:2), the teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15), those who call themselves Jews but are not (2:9; 3:9), and the beast from the sea suggest opposition stemming from multiple sources.

to accept this prophetic message as authoritative.²² Beyond this, it is difficult to determine the official role or level of authority exercised by John (and other early Christian prophets), given the paucity of references to other offices within these churches in Revelation.²³ It is reasonable, however, to assume that John may have exercised a leadership role in this region prior to the writing of Revelation.

In addition to these references to “prophecy,” John also refers to his visionary experience as being “in the Spirit” (1:10; cf. 4:2; 17:3; 21:20).²⁴ Although there may be Old Testament precedent for such a reference (see Mic 3:8; Zech 7:12; Ezek 11:24; 37:1), the phrase is more likely rooted in early Christian experience and practice.²⁵ Because there is little explanation for being “in the Spirit,” it appears that John assumes that his readers will understand and accept his experience.

Beyond this linking of John’s prophetic message with his experience “in the Spirit,” John also links the words of Jesus with the words of the Spirit. Within Rev 2-3, each message begins with the formulaic “thus says...” (τὰδε λέγει) and ends with the exhortation to “hear what the Spirit says to the seven churches” (ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις). This framing of each of the messages suggests that John expected his readers to acknowledge these messages as the words of both Jesus and the Spirit. This suggests a connection between the words of Jesus, the work of the Spirit, and the role of a prophet within the early

²² The identification of this work as that of “prophecy” is also coupled with statements indicating the divine origin of the message (1:1-3; 22:6), blessing for the keeping of the words of the book (1:3; 22:9), and a warning against adding to or taking away from the words of the book (22:18-19). God himself also testifies to the veracity of the words recorded by John in 21:5 (cf. 22:6). See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 87.

²³ Although some have viewed the “angels” of Rev 2-3 as human messengers within the seven churches (see, for example, John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1966), 53), it seems best to regard these ἄγγελοι as heavenly beings, given the presence of angelic beings throughout the remainder of the book (for a helpful discussion of the issues, see Aune, *Revelation*, 1.108-112). John does refer to “apostles” (see 18:20; 21:14; cf. 2:2), but the book of Revelation is largely silent regarding the leadership structures within the seven congregations.

²⁴ In light of the wider theological context, these references are best understood as being to the Spirit of God and not to the author’s spirit. See Bauckham, *Climax*, 151-159.

²⁵ The connection between the Holy Spirit and Christian prophecy may also be seen in Acts 11:28 and 21:10-11. The experience of Philip at the conclusion of the encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch is portrayed as the work of the Spirit (Acts 8:39-40), and Paul’s experience of being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1-10), though not explicitly mentioning the Spirit, reflects a similar experience to that of Rev 4:1-2. See Bauckham, *Climax*, 159; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 73.

church.²⁶ Rev 19:10 may also be seen as linking the testimony of Jesus with the Spirit.²⁷

Beyond this linking of the voice of Jesus with the words of the Spirit, John assumes that his readers accept Jesus as an authoritative voice for the community. As it is introduced in 1:1, the book of Revelation is to be seen as coming from Jesus.²⁸ In the second and third chapters, the messages to the seven churches are given as discourses uttered in the first person by Jesus. Although this is likely intended to reflect the visionary nature of the book,²⁹ the choice to record these in the first person indicates that John expected the words of Jesus, including the “new” words of the risen Jesus heard by John, to be authoritative for the community.³⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, these messages reflect language used in the Old Testament prophetic writings to introduce oracles from God. These are introduced in Revelation as messages from Jesus, with the apparent expectation that Christian readers would regard these as authoritative prophetic messages.³¹ In light of these features, it appears that John understands his readers to be Christians who view Jesus as a voice of authority.

Through these various ways, the text of Revelation indicates that John and his readers are known, at least to a degree, by one another. John draws upon his role as a Christian prophet and bases his communication upon this relationship that he shares with his readers. Before presenting a discussion of the further presuppositions that

²⁶ So Bauckham, *Climax*, 160. It seems that John anticipated his communication of the words of the risen Jesus to be accepted as authentic based upon the validity of his experience “in the Spirit” (1:10). In the book of Revelation, these words are clearly indicated as arising in the post-ascension context and are not represented as pre-Easter sayings of Jesus. The relationship of early Christian prophets and the teachings contained in the gospels, however, is a separate issue that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

²⁷ Swete notes: “...the possession of the prophetic Spirit, which makes a true prophet, shews itself in a life of witness to Jesus which perpetuates His witness to the Father and to Himself; the two are in practice identical...; all true prophets are witnesses of Jesus, and all who have the witness of Jesus in the highest sense are prophets” (*Apocalypse*, 246). See also Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 89-90.

²⁸ The genitive, in this case, is most likely subjective. The chain of communication is from God to Jesus to his angel to John (to fellow prophets) to the churches. See Beale, *Revelation*, 183.

²⁹ It is reasonable to assume a visionary experience could have included the hearing of these messages by John as coming directly from the voice of Jesus.

³⁰ As Boring notes, if John had simply used the phrase, “thus says the Lord,” the hearers could have possibly understood this as referring to God, to Jesus, or even to the Spirit (“Voice of Jesus,” 351).

³¹ See Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 113-114; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 416n13.

John shares with his readers concerning Jesus, we will turn our attention to elements within his broader religious worldview.

Religious Worldview

After having establishing, at least provisionally, the relationship between John and his readers that would have facilitated a shared presuppositional pool between the two, we will now consider elements of the religious worldview. The religious convictions of the author and readers regarding Jesus do form an important part of this religious worldview, but exploration of these convictions will be delayed until the following major section. We will focus here upon the issues of God, angels, and demons.

John's understanding of God is clearly a major feature of his worldview.³² As the book of Revelation opens, John introduces the contents of the book as ultimately arising from God (1:1). Very little descriptive language is given in the opening chapter that would have served to identify this particular "God," and it appears that John expects his readers to share his commitment to this same deity. Beyond this basic orientation, John assumes that his readers will be familiar with the narrative concerning God in the Old Testament writings and will identify the God of Revelation with this deity. He is the all-powerful creator (3:14; see also 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22; cf. Gen 1-2). He is the one who delivers his people in the (new) Exodus (15:1-4; 16:1-21; cf. Exod 7-11), and he brings to completion the eschatological hope of the new heavens and new earth (3:12; 7:17; 21:1-4; cf. Isa 65:17-25). John also describes God's character in a way that takes for granted convictions expressed in the Old Testament writings,³³ and his depiction of

³² Much could be said regarding John's presentation of God in Revelation, but discussion here will be largely limited to elements indicating shared religious presuppositions regarding God. On this, see Traugott Holtz, "Gott in der Apokalypse," in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (ed. J. Lambrecht; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1980), 247-265; Anton Vögtle, "Der Gott der Apokalypse," in *La notion biblique de Dieu* (ed. J. Coppens; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1976), 377-398. Boring provides a helpful discussion of the presupposed macronarrative in Revelation, particularly as it relates to God ("Narrative Christology," 718-720). On patterns in the New Testament more broadly, see Larry W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology* (Library of Biblical Theology; Nashville: Abingdon, 2010).

³³ These include characteristics such as holiness (4:8; 15:4; 16:5; cf. Isa 6:3), justice (15:3; 16:5, 7; 19:2; cf. Ps 9), sovereignty (11:17; 12:10; cf. Ps 47; 145:11-13), and wrath (14:19; 15:1; 16:1; 19:15; cf. Ps 2:5; Jer 25:15).

the heavenly temple/throne-room draws from Old Testament descriptions.³⁴

Beyond these features, John presupposes that his readers share the same religious orientation to this God. One of the features that permeates this book is the conviction that this God alone is worthy of worship (4:8, 11; 5:13; 7:10, 12; 11:16-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-8, 10). These scenes of worship affirm not only that earthly worship of God reflects that which is taking place in the heavens, but also that such a response is the only appropriate one.³⁵ Beyond the offering of worship, other honors, such as divine names, belong to God alone (17:3; cf. 13:5-6).³⁶ As John appears to advocate continued commitment to this type of devotion in the face of internal and external pressure, he seems to assume that his readers will share his religious convictions concerning devotion to God.

In light of these shared convictions, then, one may argue that John's religious orientation, with the major exception of his views concerning Jesus, bears similarity to the broader contours of ancient Jewish monotheism.³⁷ In his presentation of the relationship of Jesus and God, then, John demonstrates convictions in keeping with the early Christian movement. In addition to the sharing of worship (5:13-14; 7:10; cf. 4:11; 5:12; 7:12) and divine titles (see 1:8; 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13), descriptions of the relationship between Jesus and God as a father and son (2:18, 27; 3:5; cf. Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Mark 14:36; Luke 3:22; John 1:34; 5:17-27; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:1-5; 5:5), of Jesus as the one who reveals the word of God (1:1; cf. John 3:34; 8:28; 14:23-24; Heb 1:1-3), and of the revelation and accomplishment of the mystery of God (10:7; cf. Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9-10; Col. 2:2-3) all reflect themes expressed elsewhere in early Christian writings. John's greeting (1:4-5) also shows similar theological shape to other early Christian expressions (see Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14;

³⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, the depiction of the heavenly throne-room in Rev 4-5 draws upon texts such as Isa 6, Ezek 1, and Dan 7.

³⁵ The prohibitions against worshipping angels (19:10; 22:9), idols (9:20; 21:8; 22:15; cf. 2:14, 20), and the image of the beast (13:8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) help to affirm a framework in which God alone is to be worshipped.

³⁶ The reference to "blasphemous names" (17:3; cf. 13:5-6) likely reflects the adoption, within the context of Roman emperor worship, of titles that either encroached upon those applied to God by Christians or titles that were inappropriate for a human to accept.

³⁷ On the issue of ancient Jewish monotheism, see Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*; and id., "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3-26.

and 1 Pet 1:2).³⁸ This subject will be explored further in the latter portion of this chapter and in the one that follows, but for now let us return to our three main issues.

To be sure, John believes in a supreme being in heaven to whom all allegiance and devotion is due, but his vision also includes a robust depiction of other heavenly beings. Within Revelation, John describes a diversity of beings, such as the four living creatures (4:6-9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4), the twenty-four elders (4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4),³⁹ and various other angelic beings.⁴⁰ One angelic being, Michael, is even identified by name (12:7), in keeping with other Jewish texts.⁴¹ These heavenly beings function as servants of God (19:10; 22:9), providing heavenly devotion (4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:11-12; 8:3-5; 11:16-18; 19:1-8), serving as his messengers (1:1; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:15; 22:6, 16), and executing his commands (7:2; 8:2; 9:13-15; 16:1). John also makes use of traditional prohibitions against the worship of angels (19:10; 22:8-9).⁴² Although John likely builds upon the readers' knowledge of these angelic beings, he seems to assume that his readers will share a similar view of a heavenly realm inhabited by heavenly beings who serve the creator God. The presence of these beings does not challenge the centrality of God in John's worldview, and the angelic creatures play an important role in the the execution of God's plans.

In addition to those heavenly beings that serve God, John also acknowledges the presence of evil supernatural forces. These evil heavenly beings⁴³ are led by a being known as the "devil" (διδύβολος; see 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10), "Satan" (ὁ

³⁸ Although it may be anachronistic to describe John's greeting as "trinitarian" in the full sense of the term as later expressed in Christian thought, the statement in 1:4-5 of grace and peace from "him who is and was and is to come," from "the seven spirits before his throne," and from "Jesus Christ" exhibits a pattern similar to what may be found in Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; and 1 Pet 1:2.

³⁹ Although the text does not explicitly identify the twenty-four elders as angelic beings, their presence and function within the heavenly temple/throne-room suggests that it is best to view them as such. So Beale, *Revelation*, 322; Krodell, *Revelation*, 155; Roloff, *Revelation*, 70.

⁴⁰ In some cases, John refers to specific unnamed angels, such as the seven angels who sound the trumpets (8:2, 6-9:21; 11:15), the four angels standing at the corners of the earth (7:1-2), or the angels designated as "mighty" (5:2; 10:1-7; 18:21). In other cases, John simply refers to the angelic host collectively (see 7:11; 12:7).

⁴¹ See Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; 3 Bar. 11:4, 6, 7, 8 (Gk. recension); 2 En. 22:6 (LR); 33:10 (LR); 1QM 17.6-8a.

⁴² See *Apoc. Ab.* 11:1-5 (cf. 17:1-2); *Lad. Jac.* 3; *Jos. Asen.* 14:11-12 (LR); 15:11-12 (LR); Tob 12:16-22; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:11-15; *Ascen. Isa.* 7:18-23; 8:1-10, 15; 2 En. 1:4-8; 3 En. 1:7. See Bauckham, "Worship of Jesus"; and id., *Climax*, 118-149; Stuckbruck, *Angel Veneration*; and id., "An Angelic Refusal of Worship," 679-696.

⁴³ These are termed as "angels" in 12:7-9.

σατανᾶς; 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7), the “serpent” (ὁ ὄφις; 12:9, 14, 15, 20:2), and the “dragon” (ὁ δράκων; 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2). Satan, in John’s narrative world, is a personal, powerful, and corrupt heavenly being who stands behind the opposition to God’s people. This is depicted through such images as making war with the offspring of the woman clothed with the sun (12:17), the granting of authority to the beasts from the sea and from the land (13:2; cf. 13:11-12), and the leading astray of the nations in action against God’s people (12:9; 16:13-14; 20:7-8). This evil heavenly being stands under the authority of God and will be defeated and judged (12:9; 20:2, 10). John may indeed seek to expand the understanding of his readers in this regard,⁴⁴ but it is likely that his readers share a similar assessment of the supernatural world. In his polemic against participation in idolatrous activities, such as emperor worship, one of the arguments raised by John is the connection between idols and demons (9:20; cf. 1 Cor 10:20-21; Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37 (LXX 105: 37)). It appears, then, that John assumes his readers will accept the presence of such beings and desire not to be associated with them.

Thus, our survey indicates that John shares a number of elements of his religious worldview with his readers. The topics of God, angels, and demons as presented in Revelation indicate that John’s worldview is roughly congruent with that of his readers. Rather than attempting to persuade his readers toward a different orientation to the divine, John utilizes these shared convictions in order to persuade them to act in accordance with them. This section has also served to demonstrate common convictions with other early Christian writings. Although the particular expressions used by John do not indicate indebtedness to any one particular writing or author, a number of features of John’s religious convictions bear similarity to those expressed in other early Christian writings. As they are central to the present study as well as to the book of Revelation, we turn attention now to the religious convictions concerning Jesus that John expects to share with his readers.

The Presentation of Jesus

Like the broader religious worldview assessed above, elements of John’s depiction of Jesus likely draw upon shared knowledge and religious convictions. In this section

⁴⁴ The connection between Satanic power and imperial authority, particularly expressed in the local forms of emperor worship, appears to be unique among the New Testament authors.

we will investigate three areas of shared knowledge and conviction. In the first part of this section, I will discuss possible references to the life and teachings of Jesus in Revelation. Next, titles and images used by John in Revelation that may be found in other early Christian writings will be explored. Finally, we will evaluate the possible relationship between worship as depicted in Revelation and the devotional practices of the seven churches to whom John writes. In each of these sections, references to other early Christian writings will be given in order to situate John's presentation of Jesus within the wider Christian context of the day and suggest ways in which John may draw upon existing religious convictions concerning Jesus.

Life and Teachings of Jesus

Due to the type of references to Jesus found in Revelation, some have tended to downplay the relationship of Revelation to the life and teachings of Jesus, particularly as expressed in the canonical gospels.⁴⁵ Although it is difficult to demonstrate convincingly that John was familiar with any particular gospel text, a number of statements in Revelation appear to engage elements of early Christian teaching about Jesus. This section shall evaluate elements that reflect familiarity with details of Jesus' life before considering possible relationships between statements in Revelation and teachings associated with Jesus.

First, John expects his readers to possess a certain level of knowledge about the life of Jesus.⁴⁶ In Rev 12, John appears to refer to Jesus' birth,⁴⁷ and he makes a claim about Jesus' familial ancestry (3:7; 5:5; 22:16) reminiscent of those made by

⁴⁵ Despite the claims of some that Revelation contains relatively few references to the historical Jesus (see Aune, "Stories of Jesus," 301; Guthrie, "Christology," 399), a number of statements in Revelation suggest that John expects some degree of familiarity with the historical Jesus and teachings connected with him.

⁴⁶ See Aune, "Stories of Jesus," 292-319. Tribble notes a few potential references, but he is far too brief in his discussion of this relationship ("The Christ of the Apocalypse," 167). See also L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 10-13. Contra, Ford, who views the references as relatively lacking in Revelation (*Revelation*, 18-19). As will be argued here, sufficient detail exists to indicate John's familiarity with the life of Jesus.

⁴⁷ A particular birth narrative, however, does not seem to be in view. As noted previously, John interacts here with mythology that was adapted by and associated with the Roman emperor. It is also likely that the image of the woman functions corporately rather than as a direct reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This becomes more apparent in John's reference (12:17) to "her children," which refers to Christians rather than to biological siblings of Jesus (so Beale, *Revelation*, 628-632; Caird, *Revelation*, 149-150). L. Vos also suggests that the dragon attempting to devour the male son (12:4) may reflect the story of Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus (see Matt 2:1-23), and the fleeing of the woman to the wilderness may allude to the flight to Egypt in Matt 2:13 (*Synoptic Traditions*, 12).

other early Christian authors.⁴⁸ John also assumes an awareness of the names of the twelve apostles (21:14). Most prominently, however, John expects his readers to possess a basic knowledge of Jesus' death and resurrection. Introduced in 1:5, this basic framework is picked up in the imagery of the slain Lamb (5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). The particular means of death, crucifixion, is also noted in 11:8,⁴⁹ and the imagery of Jesus as the "pierced one" (1:7) likely refers to his death (cf. John 19:34-37). John assumes knowledge of the resurrection,⁵⁰ and he makes reference to the ascension (12:5; cf. Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11). Within Revelation, the main focus is upon the words and actions of Jesus as encountered by John in his visionary experience. This likely explains the lack of emphasis upon particular miraculous works or other key events in the earthly ministry of Jesus. It may very well be that John doesn't need to elaborate because he already knew of their level of knowledge concerning significant events in the life of Jesus.

In addition to details about Jesus' life, a number of statements in Revelation bear resemblance to teachings attributed to Jesus elsewhere in other early Christian writings. Given John's allusive use of other materials, such as the Old Testament writings, it is unsurprising that estimates of the number of possible allusions to teachings of Jesus in Revelation vary considerably.⁵¹ I will suggest here possible allusions and discuss these in the order in which they appear in Revelation.⁵²

The opening chapter of Revelation contains two references that should be considered. First, the blessing on those who hear the words of the book (1:3) may

⁴⁸ See Matt 1:1, 2, 3, 6, 17, 20; 2:6; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9 (cf. 21:15); Mark 10:47, 48; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; 3:31, 33; 18:38, 39; John 7:42; Acts 2:29-31; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; Heb 7:14.

⁴⁹ Although Ford suggests that the reference is ambiguous (*Revelation*, 179-180), it is most natural to take this as a reference to the means of Jesus' death.

⁵⁰ This is expressed, however, in somewhat distinct terminology. John adapts the language of "firstborn from the dead" (1:5) and the "Living One" who "was dead" and is "alive forever and ever" (1:18; cf. 2:8).

⁵¹ Swete provides a preliminary, though brief, consideration of this (*Apocalypse*, clvi). L. Vos provides the most extensive discussion, albeit with a slightly different focus, in his *Synoptic Traditions*. His concern in assessing possible allusions to the teaching of Jesus in Revelation is directed toward the stability of the Synoptic traditions at the end of the first century (with Revelation as a possible witness to this stability) rather than to explore John's familiarity with and use of these traditions in developing his portrayal of Jesus in Revelation. See also Bauckham, *Climax*, 92-117; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxxxiv-lxxxvi; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.264-264.

⁵² Where it appears that John may be drawing from particular teachings, traditions, and/or texts, close examination will be offered. In the cases where expressions in Revelation reflect Christian conventions that have become standard by the end of the first century C.E., exhaustive discussion will not be given. Instead, representative examples from a variety of writings will be offered.

allude to the statement of Jesus as expressed in Luke 11:28.⁵³ Next, as noted in the previous chapter, the statement in 1:7 regarding Jesus “coming on the clouds” reflects a similar conflation of imagery from Dan 7 and Zech 12 as in Matt 24:30.⁵⁴ A comparison of the wording of the two texts indicates that it is unlikely that John is using the text of Matthew,⁵⁵ but the similarities between the two texts may suggest a common tradition. Both appear to draw from a non-LXX source in their use of Zech 12,⁵⁶ and both universalize the imagery.⁵⁷

A number of examples may be found in the context of the messages to the seven churches. First, the formulaic statement “let the one who has ears hear” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; cf. 13:9)⁵⁸ is likely drawn from a saying associated with Jesus (see Matt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9; 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; cf. Mark 8:18).⁵⁹ The

⁵³ Bauckham, *Climax*, 94. Verbal correspondence may be observed in the use of ἀκούω, but John uses τηρέω rather than φυλάσσω, as Luke does. L. Vos posits that this may reflect familiarity with the tradition rather than with the Gospel of Luke (*Synoptic Traditions*, 59).

⁵⁴ See A. Y. Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 536-547. Stendahl proposes that the combination of these texts in Matthew and Revelation may reflect either an understanding of this combination as the words of Jesus or as a saying circulated in connection with early teachings about Jesus (Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (ASNU 20; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1954), 214). Lindars suggests that this combination may have been part of an oral apologetic tradition (Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961), 127).

⁵⁵ The statement in Revelation differs in a couple significant ways. First, the order of the imagery is different in Revelation (coming with the clouds/every eye look upon (even those who pierced)/all the tribes of earth will mourn) than in Matthew (sign of the son of man in heaven/all the tribes will look upon/see the son of man coming with the clouds). Second, the text in Matthew is presented as a third person saying given in Jesus’ discourse, whereas the text in Revelation is given as a first person utterance. Third, the statement in Revelation also draws from the image of the “pierced one,” which is not used in Matt 24. This suggests that the use in Revelation is intended to place particular emphasis upon the death of Jesus, while the statement in Matthew focuses more generally upon the apocalyptic coming of the son of man. Finally, the “coming on/with the clouds” features different prepositions (Matthew: ἐπί, in agreement with the LXX; Revelation: μετά, in agreement with Theod.). Although it is possible that John could have made modifications of the imagery from Matt 24, particularly in light of his usage of OT materials, it seems more probable that John was not utilizing Matthew’s gospel here.

⁵⁶ Matt 24 and Rev 1 both read ὄψονται. Zech 12:10 (LXX) reads ἐπιβλέψονται. See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 9; Loisy, *Apocalypse*, 72.

⁵⁷ Matt: πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. Rev: πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. In Zech 12:10 it is the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem who mourn.

⁵⁸ ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω.

⁵⁹ The Synoptics, in their different expressions, use ὁὔτα, whereas Revelation uses οὖς. Bauckham posits that this may reflect dependence on a tradition independent of the Synoptics (*Climax*, 93-94). See also Anne-Marit Enroth, “Hearing Formula,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 598-608; Swete, *Apocalypse*, clv; Beale, *John’s Use*, 308-310; L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 73-75. This phrase may also be found in variant readings of Mark 7:16; Matt 25:29; Luke 12:21; 13:9; 21:4. Aune also notes occurrences in later traditions (*Revelation*, 1.150-151).

motif of “ears that hear” can be found in Old Testament prophetic books (see, for example, Isa 6:10; 32:3; Jer 5:21; 6:10; Ezek 3:10; 12:2), but it seems more likely that John is drawing upon sayings associated with Jesus as expressed in other early Christian writings.⁶⁰ Next, John may also assume familiarity with a teaching comparing Jesus’ *parousia* to an unexpected thief (3:3; 16:15).⁶¹ Matthew and Luke both record statements comparing the coming of the son of man to a thief breaking into a house (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39).⁶² This imagery is also picked up elsewhere in the New Testament (see 1 Thess 5:4; 2 Pet 3:10), which may suggest that it was widely known in the early church. Third, A. Y. Collins notes similarity between the statement in the message to the church at Sardis concerning the “confessing” of the overcomer’s name before God (3:5) and ones found in Matt 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9.⁶³ Fourth, the title “Amen” (3:14), although likely drawn from Isa 65, could allude to Jesus’ use of ἀμήν.⁶⁴ Fifth, the statement in 3:20 of standing at the door could reflect a reworking of the parable in Luke 12:35-40.⁶⁵ Finally, the promise of sharing Jesus’ throne in 3:21 could reflect ones found in Matt 19:28 and Luke 22:28-30.⁶⁶ In short, Rev 2-3 contains a clustering of sayings that may be linked with the teachings of Jesus.⁶⁷ This is unsurprising, given that these chapters are presented as

⁶⁰ So Beale, *Revelation*, 234; Aune, *Revelation*, 1.150-151; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxxxiv.

⁶¹ In Revelation this analogy is represented as a first person saying rather than in parable form (see 3:3; 16:15) as may be found elsewhere in the New Testament writings. Bauckham provides a lengthier discussion of the relationship of this motif in Revelation to the Synoptic *parousia* parables (*Climax*, 93-112). He argues that the statements in Rev 3:3, 20; 16:15 are dependent upon the Synoptic traditions. Apart from the presence of “deparabolization” (whereby the “formal literary structure” of the parable is modified), Bauckham notes that the use of the material by John is relatively conservative (pp. 110-112). See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi.

⁶² L. Vos notes the similar interpretation and application of this imagery throughout these early Christian writings, suggesting an established tradition (*Synoptic Traditions*, 81, 85).

⁶³ A. Y. Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 559-562; and id., *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 186-189. She notes, however, that the lack of verbal parallels suggests a common tradition rather than literary dependence of some sort (“The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition,” 560). See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi; R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxxxv; L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 91.

⁶⁴ See Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 488; Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi. Parallels to Isa 65 are more convincing given the thematic links. In addition, ἀμήν functions in 3:14 as a title and not as an expression of affirmation as it is found in the Synoptic gospels.

⁶⁵ So L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 99.

⁶⁶ The imagery in Rev 3:21 differs from the two gospels in that the overcomer is depicted as sharing the throne with Jesus rather than sitting on twelve thrones alongside Jesus. L. Vos rightly argues that the statement in 3:21 is closer to Luke than Matt, in that Luke also makes a comparison between Jesus receiving a kingdom and the disciples receiving a kingdom (*Synoptic Traditions*, 103).

⁶⁷ Swete argues that the references to “manna” (2:17) and “blindness” (3:17) may also allude to Jesus’ teaching (*Apocalypse*, clvi), but there does not seem to be enough evidence to substantiate these links.

messages from Jesus written in the first person, and this serves to strengthen the identification of the messages as coming from Jesus himself.

Potential allusions to teachings associated with Jesus can be found with lesser frequency throughout the remainder of Revelation. First, the sequence of judgments connected with the opening of the seals in 6:2-7:1 resembles the apocalyptic discourse found in the Synoptics (Matt 24:6-7, 9, 29; Mark 13; Luke 21:8-12, 25-26).⁶⁸ Next, the promise of the water of life in 7:16-17 (cf. 21:6; 22:17) bears similarity to statements in the Gospel of John (John 4:10; 7:37).⁶⁹ Third, the image of the trampling of the holy city in 11:2 utilizes language similar to that of Luke 21:24.⁷⁰ Fourth, the proclamation regarding the “authority of his Christ” in 12:10 may allude to convictions about Jesus’ authority as expressed in texts such as Matt 28:18.⁷¹ Fifth, the statement in 13:10 regarding the sword may reflect the statement in Matt 26:52.⁷² Sixth, the description of the beast from the land bears some similarity to the statement in Matt 7:15 concerning false prophets.⁷³ Seventh, the proclamation of the gospel by the angel in 14:6 appears to presuppose the statement that the gospel must be preached to all the nations (see Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10).⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Comparison with the material found in Matt 24 demonstrates a number of common elements. These include the depiction of war and conquest (Rev 6:1-4; cf. Matt 24:6-7), famine (Rev 6:5-6, 8; cf. Matt 24:7), persecution of the people of God (Rev 6:9-11; cf. Matt 24:9), earthquakes (Rev 6:12; cf. Matt 24:7), and signs in the heavens (Rev 6:12-14; cf. Matt 24:29). See Bauckham, *Climax*, 94; also R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxxxv, 158-160; L. Vos, *Synoptic Tradition*, 191-192. John may be drawing from traditional motifs associated with eschatological judgment (see Isa 13:9-11; Joel 3:15-16), but the association of these elements with the Lamb’s opening of the seals in Revelation likely reflects a prior association of these motifs with the teaching of Jesus.

⁶⁹ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi. This imagery is likely drawn from Old Testament texts such as Isa 55:1, Jer 2:13, and Zech 14:8. Within the Old Testament context, the provision of living water is associated with God. The focus in the Gospel of John is upon Jesus as the one who provides this living water. The book of Revelation, however, associates this both with the “One seated on the throne” (21:6) and with the Lamb (7:16; cf. also 22:17).

⁷⁰ So Bauckham, *Climax*, 94; L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 120, 125; Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi.

⁷¹ Cf. also John 3:35; 5:27; 13:3; 17:2; Eph 1:21-22; Dan 7:14. Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi. As noted in the previous chapter, the phrase “his Christ” (τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ) is likely drawn from Ps 2.

⁷² Rev 13:10 εἴ τις ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι. Matt 26:52 πάντες γὰρ οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀπολούνται. L. Vos argues that this statement reflects a teaching of Jesus but is not necessarily dependent upon Matthew (*Synoptic Traditions*, 108-109). See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi.

⁷³ L. Vos argues that John demonstrates familiarity with this teaching of Jesus based on the similar referent (false prophets in Matthew; a beast later identified as a false prophet in Rev 16:13), similar descriptions as outwardly appearing as sheep, and similar descriptions of the true inward character (*Synoptic Traditions*, 130-132).

⁷⁴ So L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 156.

Next, the image of the harvest in 14:14-20, although likely drawn from Joel 4:13,⁷⁵ may allude to teachings of Jesus (see Mark 4:26-29; cf. Matt 3:12; 13:24-30, 36-43).⁷⁶ Ninth, the image of the wedding feast in 19:9 may reflect Jesus' use of wedding feast imagery (see Matt 22:1-14; cf. also Matt 9:14-17; 25:1-13; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39; 13:29; 14:15-24; John 3:29).⁷⁷ Next, the phrase "rejoice and be glad" (19:7) may allude to Matt 5:12.⁷⁸ Finally, the references in 1:3 and 22:10 to the nearness of time may reflect Jesus' eschatological teachings (see Mark 13:28 and Luke 21:8).⁷⁹

Taken together, should we assume this prevalence to be merely incidental? In light of the various examples noted above, it seems highly probable, rather, that John was familiar with a body of tradition associated with Jesus and, in turn, expected his readers to share his knowledge of these, at least to some degree. Since these allusions cannot be proven to depend upon a particular gospel text, it is difficult to determine whether this awareness was a result of familiarity with particular texts or with teaching that had taken place in the context of church gatherings.⁸⁰ As John also appears to be a known individual within the communities to which he was writing, it may be that John's own teaching provided some of the content that he

⁷⁵ Imagery of the harvest may also draw from Isa 27:12; Hos 6:11; Jer 2:3; 51:33.

⁷⁶ L. Vos notes that some of the details shared between Revelation and the synoptics "indicates a very thorough knowledge of these synoptic sayings on the part of the Apocalyptist" (148). See also A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 189-195.

⁷⁷ See Swete, *Apocalypse*, clvi; Beale, *Revelation*, 945; L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 166.

⁷⁸ So R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, 1.lxxxvi. Rev 19:7 χαίρωμεν καὶ ἀγαλλιῶμεν. Matt 5:12 χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε. Charles notes that these expressions, in addition to the verbal parallel, also reflect a similarity in thought.

⁷⁹ L. Vos also suggests the reference to the sword (6:4; cf. Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10), the plea for the rocks and mountains to fall on the recipients of judgment (6:16; cf. Luke 23:30; Hos 10:8), and the association of the *parousia* and rewards (22:12; cf. Matt 16:27) may allude to teachings of Jesus. In the case of these references, the relationship is more tenuous. Swete also posits that the statements in 14:12 regarding the "patience of the saints" and in 17:14 regarding the "called, chosen, and faithful" may allude to Jesus' teaching (*Apocalypse*, clvi). There does not appear to be sufficient grounds for these two, however.

⁸⁰ R. H. Charles concludes that John would have had access to Matthew, Luke, 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Ephesians, and possibly Galatians, 1 Peter, and James (*Revelation*, 1.lxxxiii). Due to the way in which John utilizes his materials, it is difficult to determine if he would have possessed copies of these writings. If Revelation was composed under the reign of Domitian, possession of copies of these texts would have been possible. At the very least, it appears that John has an awareness of teachings in circulation amongst the churches.

assumes.⁸¹ Although verbal parallels are difficult to establish, it seems that John does allude to a number of teachings associated with Jesus. As was the case regarding his use of the Old Testament, references to Jesus' teaching do not quote precisely any known texts. It may well be that John had access to traditions other than those of the four gospels,⁸² or he may employ the same degree of freedom in alluding to Jesus' teachings as well.⁸³ It appears, then, that John was able to presuppose that his readers were familiar with sayings associated with Jesus and to assume that such sayings would be recognized as authoritative within these communities.⁸⁴

Early Christian Titles and Images of Jesus

In conjunction with statements in Revelation that may allude to teachings associated with Jesus, a number of titles and images employed by John reflect common Christian usage elsewhere. Common designations, such as *χριστός* (1:1, 2, 5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6),⁸⁵ *κύριος* (11:8; 17:14; 19:16; 22:20),⁸⁶ and *υἱός θεοῦ* (2:18; cf. 1:6, 2:28; 3:21; 14:1),⁸⁷ may be found in other early Christian literature, and usage in Revelation is much in keeping with these other occurrences. Designations such as *ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ* (19:13; John 1:1, 14; cf. 1 John 1:1) and *ὁ ἅγιος* (3:7;

⁸¹ It is also possible that John's association with other Christian prophets could have provided an awareness of the general teaching within the churches located in Asia Minor. See Bauckham, *Climax*, 84-91 for a discussion of John's relationship to other early Christian prophets.

⁸² See Bauckham, *Climax*, 94.

⁸³ Although John does differ in his wording from the statements as recorded in the Synoptics, his use of this material does indicate faithfulness to teachings maintained in a similar form to those in the Synoptics. So L. Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 214, 223.

⁸⁴ So Aune, *Revelation*, 1.265.

⁸⁵ *Χριστός* may be found with *Ἰησοῦς* (see 1:1, 2, 5; cf. Mark 1:1; John 1:17; Acts 2:38; Rom 1:4; Heb 13:8; James 1:1), and it occurs independently four times (see 11:15; 12:10; 20:4; 20:6; see also, for example, Matt 16:16; 26:63-64; Acts 3:18-20, 5:42; 1 John 2:22).

⁸⁶ The general use of *κύριος* to refer to Jesus in Revelation reflects patterns elsewhere in the New Testament, both in independent occurrences (11:8; cf. John 20:28; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Thess 1:6; Heb 2:3) and in association with the proper name *Ἰησοῦ* (22:20, 21; cf. Luke 24:3; Acts 7:59; Rom 1:4; 4:24). The two designations of Jesus as the *κύριος κυρίων* (17:14; 19:16; cf. 1:5), however, reflect a title used only of God elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Tim 6:15).

⁸⁷ This appears as a common designation in the gospels (see Matt 4:3, 6; 8:29; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40; Mark 3:11; 5:7; 15:39; Luke 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 3:16-18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31) and in 1 John (3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20). Examples may also be found in Acts 9:20; Rom 1:4; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; and Heb 4:13-14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29.

Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 3:14; 13:34) may also be found in other early Christian writings.

Images used of Jesus in Revelation likewise demonstrate commonality with other earlier Christian writings, albeit with some significant differences. The imagery of Jesus possessing the “keys of death and hades” (1:18), though likely not demonstrating a direct dependence upon 1 Cor 15:54-57, conveys a similar notion of Jesus’ victory over death.⁸⁸ Also of note is the image of Jesus as the ἄρχή (3:14), which bears a resemblance to language used in Col 1.⁸⁹ Although this image in Rev 3:14 is likely drawn from Isa 65:17 rather than any particular early Christian writing, the association of Jesus with the (new) creation may also be found elsewhere within the New Testament (see 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:12-16). Thirdly, the concept of Jesus as shepherd (7:17; cf. also 2:27; 12:5; 19:15) is present in other texts (Matt 2:6; 15:24; 25:32-33; 26:31-32; Mark 14:27-28; John 10:1-18, 27; 21:15-17; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4; *1 Clem.* 16:1).⁹⁰ Finally, the authority of Jesus over the angels (see 1:1, 16, 20; 5:11-14; 19:14) is also depicted in a number of early Christian texts (see Matt 13:40-42; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31-32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess 1:7; Jude 14-15; cf. Heb 1:4-14).⁹¹

As noted in the previous chapter, examples of Lamb imagery exist in early Christian writings.⁹² Jesus is depicted as a Passover lamb in 1 Cor 5:7 and as a lamb without blemish or spot in 1 Pet 1:19. Although the lamb imagery is not applied explicitly to Jesus in Acts 8, the imagery of the servant from Isa 53, including the depiction of the servant as a lamb, is interpreted as referring to Jesus.⁹³ The most extended usage of this motif, outside the book of Revelation, may be found in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John uses the term ἄμνος rather than ἀρνίον, but some thematic similarities do exist between the two. In the Gospel of John, the

⁸⁸ As noted in the previous chapter, however, Old Testament texts, such as Isa 22:22 and Job 38:17, and imagery from the surrounding Greco-Roman culture associated with Hekate are most likely the primary sources of this imagery. The common Christian conviction of Jesus’ victory over death has led to its application here to Jesus.

⁸⁹ Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 489.

⁹⁰ See Aune, *Revelation*, 3.477.

⁹¹ See Beale, *Revelation*, 960.

⁹² See Comblin, *Le Christ*, 28; Holtz, *Christologie*, 44.

⁹³ Acts 8:32-33 cites Isa 53:7-8. The question of the Ethiopian eunuch regarding the identification of the one of whom the prophet speaks and Philip’s response suggests that Philip applied this text, including the image of the lamb, to Jesus.

“Lamb” functions as a title in 1:29 (ὁ ἄμνος τοῦ θεοῦ), and the author places special emphasis upon the association of Jesus’ death and the Passover (see John 13:1; 19:14, 31). It appears likely that the imagery in Revelation is not dependent upon any particular New Testament text, but it does reflect the sentiment of other early Christian expressions.

A similar relationship may be seen regarding the throne motif in Revelation (3:21; 5:6; 7:9, 17; 22:1, 3). Within other early Christian texts, Jesus is depicted as enthroned in heaven.⁹⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, the imagery has been developed from Ps 110.⁹⁵ The common theme of ascension and enthronement may be seen, but the imagery used by John does demonstrate some differences.⁹⁶

Likewise, the “one like a son of man” bears closer similarity to the image used in Daniel than the title used in the Synoptics. Although the “son of man” language differs from that of the Synoptics, imagery from Dan 7 was applied to Jesus elsewhere in early Christianity (see Matt 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27). The resulting composite image in Rev 1, however, bears greater similarity to imagery in other apocalyptic writings than to imagery elsewhere in the New Testament.

John’s use of these titles and images resembles early Christian usage elsewhere. This is not to say, however, that John has drawn slavishly from these other expression of Christian conviction. In some cases, John develops his imagery in ways distinct from other sources and engages the imagery more directly from the Old Testament.⁹⁷ The similarities with these other early Christian writings, however,

⁹⁴ In addition to texts that cite Ps 110 (Matt 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35, and Heb 1:13), a number of texts in the NT portray Jesus as being at the right hand of God (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). Reference to Jesus as simply enthroned (Matt 19:28; 25:31) may also be found. The imagery in Revelation, as already noted, stresses the sharing of the divine throne rather than enthronement at the right hand of God. In this way Revelation may be seen as an advancement upon earlier forms of this imagery. See Knight, “Enthroned Christ,” 47-48.

⁹⁵ See Hay, *Right Hand*.

⁹⁶ The main difference, here, is that the emphasis in Revelation is upon Jesus sharing the throne with God as opposed to being at the right hand of the throne of God. Although reference to a *bisellium* type throne is possible (see Markshies, “Sessio ad Dexteram”), the emphasis in Revelation is upon the throne as shared between God and Jesus.

⁹⁷ See Holtz, *Christologie*, 5-26. The theme of the Lamb, for example, while following general patterns of Christian application to Jesus elsewhere nevertheless may be seen as a unique symbol in Revelation in both its expression and significance.

suggest that John's depiction of Jesus may be situated within this wider religious context.

Jesus Devotion

One of the significant areas of relationship between Revelation and early Christian practice explored by scholars is that of worship. Although worship practices are reflected in other New Testament texts (see, for example, Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 11:17-33; 14:26-40; Col 3:16; Eph 5:19-20), Revelation is unique in the central role that worship plays.⁹⁸ The scenes of worship and the use of hymns in Revelation suggest that worship should be seen as a major focus, particularly as they occur at significant points within the book.⁹⁹ As we have already seen, statements concerning worship also play a significant role in distinguishing the followers of the beast from the followers of the Lamb (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

Past research on the Apocalypse has argued that the book of Revelation reflects particular worship practices in the seven churches and/or Jewish synagogues.¹⁰⁰ The liturgy and the wording of the hymns in Revelation, then, would be drawn from these early practices. For some, these scenes can be traced to particular worship services within the early church. Shepherd, for example, has suggested that the structure of the book as a whole has been modeled after the paschal liturgy.¹⁰¹ Piper, although positing a relationship between Revelation and the liturgy of the early church, is more cautious in this regard. In his estimation, Revelation reflects practices still in development in the early churches.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ See Ford, "Hymns in the Apocalypse," 207, 211; Barnett, "Polemical Parallelism," 112; Mounce, "Christology," 47-48; J. D. Charles, "Apocalyptic Tribute," 464. The particular relationship between Jesus and God suggested by these expressions of worship will be considered in the following chapter.

⁹⁹ Key events such as the opening of the scroll (5:1-14), the sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-12), the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-19), the preparation for the seven last plagues (15:1-8), and the fall of Babylon (17:1-19:8) provide occasion for scenes of worship.

¹⁰⁰ See Mowry, "Revelation 4-5," 75-84; Massey Hamilton Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse* (Ecumenical Studies in Worship 6; London: Lutterworth Press, 1960); Prigent, *Apocalypse et liturgie*.

¹⁰¹ Shepherd, *Paschal Liturgy*.

¹⁰² Otto A. Piper, "The Apocalypse of John and the Liturgy of the Ancient Church," *CH* 20 (1951): 18-19.

Recently, scholars have shifted away from such an analysis and have argued that the hymns in Revelation and the scenes of worship are more likely a literary creation of John.¹⁰³ As has been noted, the acclamations and scenes of worship blend elements from the Old Testament and emperor worship. With the inclusion of these elements, John has shaped the scenes as they exist in Revelation.¹⁰⁴

Although the overall scenes likely do not represent specific worship services within the churches, certain elements of these scenes likely represent early Christian practice. First, the reference to the “Lord’s Day” (κυριακῇ) in 1:10 may reflect the early Christian practice of assembling together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; *Did.* 14:1; cf. 1 Cor 16:2). John, who is absent from the community due to the circumstances placing him on Patmos, is able to participate in this worship through the Spirit.¹⁰⁵ The plea for Jesus to come quickly in 22:20 (Ἰησοῦ, ἔρχου κύριε) bears similarity to Paul’s plea in Aramaic μαράνα θά (1 Cor 16:22). The dedication of the doxology to Jesus in Rev 1:5-6 likewise indicates devotional elements associated with Jesus and can be compared to other expressions in the New Testament (see Rom 16:25-27; Heb 13:20-21; Jude 24; 2 Pet 3:18). These expressions used in the statements of worship, while not likely expressing verbatim the hymns used in corporate worship, reflect the type of devotional language employed during such gatherings.¹⁰⁶

It seems probable, then, that John has indeed shaped these scenes in Revelation, but they presuppose and affirm the offering of cultic devotion to Jesus alongside God within the seven churches rather than introduce such a practice. In this way, the scenes of worship in Revelation can be situated within the wider

¹⁰³ Peterson argues that John was persuading his readers to make the worship taking place in the church a reflection of worship taking place in heaven (David G. Peterson, “Worship in the Revelation to John,” *RTR* 47 (1988): 77). See also Morton, *One Upon the Throne*, 110-112; Robert T. Smith, “‘Worthy is the Lamb’ and Other Songs of Revelation,” *CurTM* 25 (1998): 500-506.

502; Carnegie, “Worthy is the Lamb,” 244-245; Roloff, *Revelation*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ The work of Morton, in particular, is helpful in illustrating the complexity of imagery utilized by John in Rev 4-5 (see “Glory to God”; and id., *One upon the Throne*). The integration of these various sources, particularly with respect to the theme of worship in Revelation, will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁵ So Piper, “Liturgy,” 19.

¹⁰⁶ See Hofius, “Das Zeugnis,” 512-513; Marianne Meye Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” *Ex Auditu* 8 (1992): 49; David R. Carnegie, “Worthy is the Lamb: The Hymns in Revelation,” in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (ed. Harold H. Rowdon; Leicester: Intervarsity, 1982), 247.

context of early Christian practice. In his portrayal of worship in Revelation, then, the earthly worship of the church is shown to be in accordance with the heavenly worship,¹⁰⁷ and worship of Jesus is affirmed even in light of social pressure (see 13:15; 14:9, 11; 19:20; 20:4).¹⁰⁸

Summary

Numerous aspects of John's presentation of Jesus indicate that it must be situated within the context of early Christian conviction to be fully understood. As the first part of this chapter has indicated, John and his readers, on the basis of his relationship with them, could be expected to share certain presuppositions. Elements of the wider religious worldview, with respect to God, angels, and demons, can be shown to be consistent with other early Christian writings, thus suggesting that John and his readers share a certain set of religious convictions. Similar commonality is present among expressions in Revelation concerning Jesus. Although John cannot be shown to be relying upon or alluding to a particular gospel text, his presentation echoes a number of teachings of Jesus and expects his readers to be aware of, at the very least, the wide contours of Jesus' life. John also draws upon titles, images, and devotional practices that are reflected in other early Christian writings. In each of these various ways, John appears to utilize a number of wider Christian convictions concerning Jesus.

Despite these areas of commonality and the knowledge that John expects to share with his readers, his depiction of Jesus in Revelation does not rely solely upon expressions found elsewhere in early Christianity. In many cases, John gives these teachings and images unique expression in Revelation. As was the case with imagery from the Roman imperial context and from the writings of the Old Testament, examination of the sources alone fails to provide adequate explanation for the forms in which these occur in Revelation. In the final main chapter, we will examine the way in which John utilizes this diversity of source material in his unique portrayal of Jesus in Revelation.

¹⁰⁷ So Piper, "Liturgy," 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Even if active persecution of Christians was not taking place yet, abstention from cultic participation, whether that be directed toward local deities or the Roman emperor, would have had social consequences.

CHAPTER FIVE:

JOHN'S PRESENTATION OF JESUS

Our study thus far has shown that John employs imagery from a significant religious element in his cultural context (Roman emperor worship), from the key writings of his apparent religious heritage (the Old Testament), and from convictions shared with the wider early Christian community. I have argued in each chapter that these sources are insufficient, on their own, to explain the full range of imagery used to depict Jesus in Revelation. The aim of the present chapter is to provide some synthesis of the findings of previous chapters and to explore further John's own contribution to the imagery used in Revelation.

This will be pursued through two main sections. First, we will consider the complex nature of the imagery used by John. Second, we will note possible relationships between these divergent sources through the exploration of three major themes associated with the depiction of Jesus in Revelation.

The Complexity of Imagery

Although it is possible to identify dominant themes and images, such as the Lamb, used in Revelation to depict Jesus, previous assessments have varied considerably concerning the nature and coherence of the Christological convictions expressed in Revelation. For some, the material in Revelation reflects a constellation of imagery organized loosely around a key motif¹ or exegetical approach.² For others, such as Bultmann, Edwards, and Ford, the material in Revelation reflects a conglomeration of material by several authors.³ Although these differing conclusions may reflect the

¹ Comblin, for example, considers Jesus as the servant of Isa 53 to be the central motif unifying the material in Revelation (*Le Christ*).

² Hultberg, for example, identifies John's messianic exegesis of the Old Testament as the central organizing feature of John's presentation of Jesus ("Messianic Exegesis in the Apocalypse").

³ See Bultmann, *Theologie*, 518; Edwards, "Christological Perspectives," 139-154; Ford, *Revelation*, 3-42.

methodology employed by each of these scholars, this disagreement also stems from both the varied sources of imagery and from the way in which that imagery is deployed in Revelation.

In this section I will consider these issues and suggest that the imagery used by John reflects a complex, well-developed set of religious convictions concerning Jesus. In doing so, I will propose first that the variety of images employed by John indicates a complexity, not a confusion, of thought. Next, I will revisit the variety of sources for John's imagery. I will argue that the three main sources of imagery noted in the previous three chapters – the Roman imperial cult, the Old Testament writings, and early Christianity itself – must be considered together in any assessment of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus. In the final part I will argue that the complexity of John's presentation of Jesus is integrated across the various sections of the book of Revelation.

Types of Imagery

Throughout Revelation, John employs a variety of images, titles, and themes to depict Jesus.⁴ As I have indicated in previous chapters, images are given expression in differing ways and with differing levels of significance within Revelation. Certain expressions, such as the Lamb, are arguably central in their importance for John's presentation. Other expressions, such as the Lamb's seven horns (5:6), serve as components of larger descriptions of Jesus. Key texts such as 1:12-20; 5:1-14; and 19:11-21 employ various images and themes in the depiction of Jesus and result in a complex, composite image in each passage. Although the resulting composite image is John's own creation and deserves attention as a whole, the individual components also necessitate consideration independently.

The various ways in which John combines, blends, and juxtaposes this widely-sourced imagery adds to the complexity of John's portrait of Jesus. In some

⁴ The section involving the rider on the white horse of Rev 19 may serve as an example of this variety. Within the span of a few verses, Jesus is described as coming from heaven (19:11), riding a white horse (19:11), being called "faithful" and "true" (19:11) judging and making war in justice (19:11), having eyes like fire (19:12), having many crowns (19:12), having a name only he knows (19:12), wearing a robe dipped in blood (19:13), having the name "the word of God" (19:13), leading the armies of heaven (19:14), having a sharp sword coming from his mouth (19:14), ruling with an iron scepter (19:14), treading the winepress of God's wrath (19:15), and having the title "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" written on his robe and on his thigh (19:16).

cases, these combinations occur in fairly unsurprising ways. Examples of this include the combination of Davidic imagery and royal imagery from Ps 2 (Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15) and the designation of the divine warrior in Rev 19 as “king of kings.” In other cases, however, Johns welds together contrasting images that naturally tend to pull apart. The “Lion” and the “Lamb,” for example, bring together notions of power and weakness.⁵ Similar relationships can be seen with the “slain” Lamb and the victor/divine warrior imagery (5:5-6; 17:14; cf. also 12:10) as well as in the image of the Lamb with seven horns (5:6).⁶ Likewise, if the blood on Jesus’ robe in 19:13 is seen as his own, this may be viewed as another example of the juxtaposition of imagery.⁷ We can identify such individual themes as “kingship,” “sacrifice/weakness,” and “justice/judgment” in Revelation, but the particular expression of these themes exhibits creative integration on the part of John.

The narrative development in the text also shows John’s hand.⁸ This development is expressed not only with respect to the main storyline from Rev 4 onward but also with respect to the images associated with Jesus. The theme of the throne shows evidence of development in this regard. In Rev 5, the Lamb approaches the “One seated on the throne,” takes the scroll, and is the recipient of worship alongside God. The next significant scene of worship shows the Lamb associated with the throne and the “One seated on it” (7:17). The climax of the theme arrives in 22:1-3, where the throne is designated as “of God and of the Lamb,” and the throne is located in the New Jerusalem. Although John demonstrates some

⁵ As Bauckham notes, these symbols share a “natural enmity” (Richard Bauckham, “The *Figurae* of John of Patmos,” in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves* (ed. Ann Williams; Essex: Longman, 1980), 113). Mounce argues that the image of the “lamb” is merely an extension of, not a contrast with, the images of the “root” and the “lion” (“Worthy is the Lamb,” 68). As noted, there does not appear to be sufficient evidence that John is drawing upon imagery from Second Temple Judaism that depicts a messianic lamb. Additionally, although the symbols may be used to refer to an office or individual, the individual symbols themselves contribute to the final constellation of ideas.

⁶ In the aforementioned example, the juxtaposition of the images of “lamb,” “lion,” “horns,” and “overcoming” suggests such ideas as victory through weakness and rule through sacrifice.

⁷ See Barr, “Lamb who Looks Like a Dragon,” 209-210.

⁸ In addition to the way in which symbols are developed within the text and the narrative of the struggle between the Lamb and the beast from the sea, Boring has also illustrated the way in which John’s presentation of Jesus functions on several narrative levels throughout the book (see “Narrative Christology,” 702-723). This interplay between narrative levels, Boring suggests, illustrates the Christological focus present throughout the book (720-722).

awareness of and similarity to other Christian depictions of the enthronement of Jesus,⁹ he develops the imagery progressively in the narrative.

As we have observed briefly here, John employs a great variety of symbols and images throughout Revelation. Some, such as the Lamb, are arguably more significant, while others have supporting roles within the larger context of the vision. This variety may create difficulties for interpreters who attempt to synthesize the material in Revelation because John's employment of these images, both in isolation and in combination, reflects a remarkable complexity of thought.¹⁰

Sources of Imagery

When the range and diversity of imagery in Revelation is assessed in light of the Roman imperial cult, the Old Testament writings, and convictions expressed elsewhere in early Christianity, it becomes clear that John is adopting from and interacting with each of these sources. Since we have explored these independently and at great length in the last three chapters, we will revisit these only briefly here.

As I argued in chapter two, it appears that John intends some reference to the Roman imperial cult in the imagery that he employs. The theory of "polemical parallelism" is then able to highlight and explain, to a degree, a number of images and emphases in the book. The description of Jesus as holding the seven stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1), for example, likely draws from imagery featured on Roman coins.¹¹ Ritual acts depicted in Revelation, such as the chanting of hymns (5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10; cf. 4:11; 7:12), the offering of incense (5:8; 8:3-4), the use of lamps (1:12-13; cf. 1:20, 2:1, 5), and the bestowing of crowns upon the devotees (2:10; 3:11), further reflect those associated with emperor worship. Certain literary features, such as the form of the messages in Rev 2-3 and possibly elements of the description of the heavenly throne-room in Rev 4-5,¹² are drawn from the Roman imperial context. In

⁹ See Matt 19:28; 22:44; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22.

¹⁰ So Comblin, *Le Christ*, 12.

¹¹ BMC 311 #62-63; 347 #246; see Janzen, "Jesus of the Apocalypse," 652-653.

¹² As I have argued in chapter three, John draws his imagery primarily from Ezek 1 and Isa 6 in his depiction of the throne-room in Rev 4-5. As noted in chapter two, elements from the depiction, such as the casting of crowns (4:10), the thunder and lightning (4:5), the concentric circles (4:2-6), and the use of "Lord and God" (4:11) may reflect imagery associated with either the imperial throne-room or emperor cult.

other cases, such as in the theme of Jesus' victory, the claims of the emperor are challenged and subverted. Jesus, although followed by the armies of heaven, achieves victory against the beast from the sea merely through the word of his mouth (19:15; cf. 1:16; 2:12).¹³ When compared with other early Christian texts, we see that Revelation employs a greater amount of anti-imperial imagery. Given the significance of Roman emperor worship, particularly within the context of Asia Minor, this escalation is unsurprising. Interaction with the Roman imperial cult fails to explain the full extent of the depiction of Jesus in Revelation, but imagery drawn from this context plays a significant role for John.

Engagement with the Old Testament can also be observed. In many ways, these writings provide the most significant sources for the imagery used by John. Within Revelation, John employs a wide variety of titles, images, and themes from a number of Old Testament texts and often juxtaposes these images with one another. In some cases, such as with the Davidic imagery (3:7; 5:5; 22:16), John appears to draw from Old Testament texts in a manner largely congruent with other early Christian and Second Temple Jewish writings. In other cases, John's use of the Old Testament, such as in the resulting composite image of the rider on the white horse (19:11-21), indicates skillful integration of images from a variety of texts. Certain books, such as Isaiah, Psalms, and Daniel, appear to serve a primary role in John's depiction, but he draws from a variety of texts within each of the traditional divisions of the Hebrew Bible. John's use of these texts situates his writing, both for his recipients and for subsequent readers, within this wider scriptural tradition.

The third major source for John's imagery, which has received insufficient attention in the past, is the traditions of early Christianity. John's presentation of Jesus, though exhibiting a number of unique features, must be situated in this context. John appears to expect that his readers share a number of convictions with him which may also be situated within the wider context of early Christianity. Many of the images, as we have seen, can also be associated with those found in other early Christian texts. As one investigates John's employment of these common themes, it does not appear that he is merely adopting them as they are expressed in other early

¹³ The combination of this reference to Jesus' mouth and the anticlimactic description of the battle itself (19:19-20) suggests that the victory of the Lamb over the beast and its forces is forensic rather than military.

Christian writings.¹⁴ Rather, for many of the images one is able to identify particular emphases unique to John.

One of the issues faced in assessing John's presentation of Jesus in Revelation, then, is his employment of imagery from these different sources. In many cases, as noted in chapter one, studies on the depiction of Jesus in Revelation tend to focus primarily on one of these sources, and this sort of focus can result in an unbalanced portrait of the imagery in Revelation. As I have argued in the previous three chapters, there is sufficient evidence of John's engagement with imagery and themes from the Roman imperial cult, the Old Testament writings, and convictions expressed elsewhere in early Christianity in his depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Assessments of John's presentation of Jesus, then, must take into account each of these three major sources.¹⁵ Likewise, one may attempt to identify certain images as arising from the Old Testament or the wider cultural or early Christian contexts, but the employment of imagery in Revelation does not appear to be simply a matter of combining these sources. Instead, John's employment of imagery from these sources is arguably more complex.

Composite or Complex Work?

As indicated above, John employs a variety of imagery that interacts with material from the Roman imperial cult, the Old Testament writings, and the context of early Christianity. The distribution of this material has caused some to question the essential unity of the book of Revelation and argue that it instead should be viewed as a composite document. Some scholars, such as Edwards and Ford, have suggested that the differing types of imagery within Revelation may be due to the incorporation of a Christian framework (1:1-3:22; 22:8-21) around an underlying Jewish core.¹⁶

¹⁴ Although other early Christian texts associate Jesus with the divine throne (Matt 19:28; 22:44 25:31; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; and Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22), John depicts this association in unique ways throughout the narrative. Likewise, other early Christian authors referred to Jesus using "lamb" imagery (see John 1:29; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19). The identification of Jesus as the Lamb in these other texts, however, does not nearly approximate the same importance as it does for John.

¹⁵ See Fiorenza, *Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 17; Beale, "Other Religions in New Testament Theology," 79-105; D. Thomas, *Revelation 19*, 166-170.

¹⁶ Edwards, "Christological Perspectives," 139. The divisions here reflect those posited by Edwards. Ford connects 4:1-11:19 with John the Baptist and 12:1-19:21 with his disciple. The remainder of the book betrays a Christian perspective, perhaps belonging to a disciple of John the Baptist (Ford, *Revelation*, 3-42). Aune provides a helpful summary of the major source critical options (*Revelation*,

Regarding the presentation of Jesus in Revelation, certain sections, such as 1:1-3:22 and 22:8-21, do indeed demonstrate a more obvious “Christian” influence, such as the concern for the churches and the use of the name “Jesus” (1:1, 2, 5, 9; 22:16, 20, 21). Within 4:1-22:7, certain images such as the “Lamb” and the “divine warrior” are more central. References to Jesus by name, however, are relatively rare (12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4),¹⁷ and references to the “church” are limited to 1:1-3:22 and 22:8-21.¹⁸ Although such details indicate some differences between the various parts of Revelation in the use of explicit “Christian” terminology, such theories do not consider the wider evidence in Revelation.

Upon closer investigation, the distribution of “Christological” material in Revelation supports the conclusions of studies advocating an overall compositional unity to the book.¹⁹ A number of themes and images appear in sections alleged by some to be either “Christian” or “Jewish,” such as kingship (1:5, 6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 12:10; 17:14; 19:16), victory (3:21; 5:5; 17:14), the sevenfold spirit (1:4; 5:6), the throne (1:4; 3:21; 4:2 (x2), 3, 4, 5, 6 (x3), 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9, 10, 11 (x2), 15; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4, 5; 20:11, 12; 21:3, 5), “one like a son of man” (1:13; 14:14), the “Lamb” (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4 (x2), 10; 15:3; 17:14 (x2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3), the “rod” of Ps 2 (2:27; 12:5; 19:15), and Davidic imagery (3:7; 5:5; 22:16). References to “Jesus” do appear within the central portion of the book as noted above (12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10; 20:4), and John also alludes to teachings associated with Jesus in this portion of the book (see, for example, 7:16-17; 11:2; 12:10; 13:10; 14:6, 14-20; 16:15; 19:7, 9). The prevalence and integration of these references makes it unlikely that they may be simply dismissed as Christian interpolations.²⁰ Although one could suggest that John

1.cx-cxvii) before advocating his own approach, which consists of three stages in the composition of the text (cxviii-cxxxiv).

¹⁷ Of these, all but 14:12 occur in the phrase μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. The occurrence in 14:12 is πίστιν Ἰησοῦ.

¹⁸ The term ἐκκλησία occurs in 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 22:16. Other designations are used by John, such as οἱ ἅγιοι (5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9; cf. Acts 26:10; Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 1:1; Heb 13:24; Jude 3). The designation of followers of the Lamb as a “kingdom” and “priests” (5:10; cf. 1:6; 20:6) likewise may be found in these allegedly separate sections.

¹⁹ See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 344-366; Bauckham, *Climax*, 1; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 27; Sweet, *Revelation*, 35-36.

²⁰ Contra Edwards, “Christological Perspectives,” 148. Edwards’ view, which she admits, is not based on any manuscript evidence.

has integrated fully an underlying Jewish apocalyptic source, it seems more likely that John has constructed his own complex literary work and weaves together various Christological themes throughout. Differences between the so-called “Christian” and “Jewish” portions may be due to literary concerns rather than differences in origin.

The intricacy in John’s presentation of Jesus is also reflected in the literary complexity of the book. The genre, in particular, has resulted in much discussion in recent years.²¹ Although it bears the title “apocalypse” and has certain similarities to other works in this genre, there are nevertheless some elements that are difficult to categorize. The book is seemingly identified as a work of prophecy (1:3; 10:11; 19:10; 22:9-10; 18-19), and as a whole it includes elements that bear resemblance to literary genres such as epistles (1:4; 22:21), imperial edicts,²² and Old Testament prophetic speech.²³ In some cases, elements of John’s presentation may be necessarily connected to the visionary nature of the book (see 1:10, 12, 19; 4:1; 5:1; 22:8). The description of Jesus in 1:12-20, for example, is written as though one is seeing, with John, the “One like a son of man” standing amongst the seven lampstands. The overall literary complexity of the book suggests that John should be viewed as a creative author, and not merely as a compiler of a variety of traditions.²⁴

²¹ Considerations of the genre of Revelation have been tied to the broader question of the definition of the apocalyptic genre. Most recent discussions of genre begin with the issues addressed in a collection of articles published in *Semeia* 14 (1979). These articles, the result of the Society of Biblical Literature’s Apocalypse Group, deal with a number of issues related to the question of early Christian and Jewish apocalypses. The definition provided by J. Collins, in particular, has played an important role in subsequent discussions (see “Introduction,” 1-20). More recent work in this area has attempted to refine and further elucidate the material addressed in 1979. The Uppsala Colloquium on Apocalypticism published its findings in 1983 (*Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Helholm; Tübingen: Mohr, 1989)), in which issues of function received greater emphasis. An additional workgroup took place at the Society of Biblical Literature in 1986, the results of which were published in *Semeia* 36 (1986). See also Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (BZNW 54; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989); John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (JSPSup 9; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991); Fiorenza, “Composition and Structure,” 352-358.

²² Rev 2-3; see Aune, “Form and Function,” 182-204.

²³ Several examples may be offered. As noted in chapter three, features of Rev 2-3 resemble elements of OT prophetic discourse. See Aune, “Form and Function,” 183, 193, 197-198; and id., *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 275-279. The descriptions of the beast from the sea and the beast from the land draw upon language from Dan 7-8. Rev 18 and the downfall of Babylon the Great likewise reflects imagery from Ezek 26 (regarding the fall of Tyre) and Jer 51 (regarding the fall of Babylon). See Bauckham, “Economic Critique,” 53.

²⁴ So also Witherington, *Revelation*, 35-36.

In the same way, the complexity of the imagery utilized in the depiction of Jesus suggests creative, mature reflection upon Jesus in light of John's wider contexts.

Investigation of the imagery used of Jesus, then, confirms assessments of the literary skill exhibited by John in his writing of the book of Revelation. Rigorous examination of the descriptions of Jesus in Revelation indicates that John has integrated various images and themes throughout the book. His presentation, although bearing a strong affinity to the Old Testament writings, should properly be described as Christian throughout. Rather than reflecting a single dominant theme or source of imagery, John expresses a complex set of religious convictions concerning Jesus. The following section will assess three major themes associated with John's presentation of Jesus in light of this complexity of thought.

Prominent Depictions of Jesus in Revelation

In support of the complexity advocated above, I turn now to three areas typically identified as significant components of John's presentation of Jesus: John's use of various titles, the theme of the Lamb, and the significance of ritual and worship in Revelation.²⁵ For each of these, I give attention to the varying degrees to which John integrates imagery from Roman emperor worship, the Old Testament writings, and early Christianity. As much of the primary source data related to titles, images, and themes has already been explored in the previous three chapters, I will cite only a few examples here. For the present section, focus will be directed primarily to the analysis of John's creative use of this imagery, rather than the relationship with primary sources.

John's Use of Titles

In the case that our study has obscured the simple fact, let us be reminded that the use of titles is indeed one of the primary ways in which John depicts Jesus. It is unsurprising, then, that a number of studies focus on the titles in Revelation as the organizing features of their discussions.²⁶ Although a number of words and phrases

²⁵ Similar concern with the interplay of material may be seen in Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial"; and id., "Form and Function"; Morton, "Glory to God and the Lamb"; and id., *One Upon the Throne*.

²⁶ See, for example, Mounce, "Christology," 42; Holtz, *Die Christologie*.

can be identified as functioning as titles in Revelation, they reflect a variety of images and themes as well. We may consider some as proper titles, such as “king” and “lord,” while others are creative adaptations of images or expressions, such as the “Lamb” and “Faithful Witness,” that function, in some ways, as titles in Revelation. Compared to other early Christian texts, the book of Revelation employs a remarkable number of titles. Fekkes notes, “The number and variety of OT messianic titles used by John...is without parallel in early Christian literature and approaches the collections of *testimonia* found in the second-century Apologists.”²⁷ In the following subsection I will explore the ingenuity with which John uses such titles, primarily in light of Old Testament and Roman imperial cult usage.

Messianic Titles

The variety of Old Testament texts we have noted John to draw upon to give titles to Jesus has been striking. A number of these texts used in Revelation were associated with messianic expectation within Second Temple Judaism and were applied to Jesus elsewhere in early Christianity. First, the title “Root of David” (5:5; 22:16) connects with both Isaianic texts and wider Davidic expectation that was present in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.²⁸ Next, two other titles, the “lion of Judah” (5:5) and the “morning star” (22:16; cf. 2:28) are derived from passages in the Pentateuch that were interpreted messianically.²⁹ In each of these cases, John utilizes titles in a way that corresponds to other Jewish or early Christian expectation of a kingly messiah from the tribe of Judah and the family of David. The related expression “anointed one” likewise forms an important aspect of this theme in Revelation (11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6).³⁰ John’s identification of Jesus as this messianic

²⁷ Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 75.

²⁸ See *Ps. Sol.* 17:21ff; 4Q252 5:1-3; 4Q285 5:1-4; *T. Jud.* 24:4-6; *Sir* 47:22; *4 Ezra* 12:32; *Tg. Isa.* 11:1, 10; *Rom* 15:12; cf. also *Matt* 1:1, 6; 22:42-45; *Mark* 11:10; 12:35-37; *Luke* 1:32, 69; 3:31; 20:41-44; *John* 7:42; *Acts* 2:30-36; 13:22-23, 34; 15:16; *Rom* 1:1-4; *2 Tim* 2:8; *Justin, I Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 86.

²⁹ See *4 Ezra* 11:36-46; 12:31-34; *T. Levi* 18:3; *T. Jud.* 24:1; *1QM* 11:6-7; *4QTest* 9-13; *CD* 7:18-20.

³⁰ Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 17 and *I En.* 48:10. In three of the four occurrences where *χριστός* is used independently (11:15; 12:10; 20:4), it may be found in contexts where the focus is clearly upon the kingdom of God. In the fourth occurrence (20:6), the term is used in reference to the “priests of God and Christ.” As indicated at the introduction of this priesthood motif in 1:6, the two themes of “kingdom” and “priests” are linked in Revelation on the basis of *Exod* 19:6. In Revelation, then, *ὁ χριστός* is used primarily in connection with its kingly connotations.

figure sets him apart from his Jewish contemporaries, but his basic patterns of usage correspond to what may be observed in other Jewish texts.³¹

Although not functioning as proper titles, additional imagery from Isa 11 and Ps 2 also indicates the application of messianic themes to Jesus. John applies to Jesus imagery from Ps 2 regarding the Lord's anointed one, such as the "iron rod" (Ps 2:9; cf. Rev 12:5; 19:15), the declaration of him as God's son (Ps 2:7; cf. Rev 2:18), and the authority over the nations (Ps 2:8; cf. Rev 1:5; 2:26-28; 11:15; 12:10). Likewise, John uses imagery from Isa 11, such as striking the earth with the rod of his mouth (Isa 11:4; cf. Rev 1:16; 2:12; 19:15) and acting with justice and righteousness (Isa 11:4; cf. Rev 19:11). As noted in chapter three, imagery such as striking with the rod of the mouth was also interpreted messianically in other Second Temple Jewish texts.³²

The use of these titles in Revelation suggests that John's religious convictions concerning Jesus can be situated within this wider context. In some cases, the application of certain titles reflects fairly standard streams of messianic interpretation, such as the emphasis upon the Davidic lineage. In other cases, John has applied these images and titles in such a way that creates new associations. In the case of the "lion of the tribe of Judah," for example (as noted in chapter three), John has juxtaposed this image with that of the Lamb, creating a new relationship between the two. It appears, then, that John does adopt imagery that can be termed "messianic" in its orientation.³³ John's use of titles in Revelation, however, moves beyond this interpretative category, particularly as it relates to the association of God and Jesus in Revelation.

Titles Associating God and Jesus

Although titles associated with messianic themes play an important role in Revelation, we must note also a second category of titles. At a number of places in the text, the author applies to Jesus titles that elsewhere belong to God. In some cases, these titles are drawn from key texts in the Old Testament and then applied to

³¹ See, for example, *Ps. Sol.* 17 and *1 En.* 48:10.

³² See *Ps. Sol.* 17:24, 35; *1 En.* 62:2; *4 Ezra* 13:9-11, 37-38; 1QSb5 24-25.

³³ So Hultberg, "Messianic Exegesis."

Jesus; in other cases, John assigns to Jesus titles used elsewhere of God in Revelation. The presence of these phenomena holds considerable significance.

As noted in chapter three, the titles “alpha and omega,” “first and last,” and “beginning and end”³⁴ are likely drawn from the Old Testament context, where they refer to God. Although these are distinct titles, it appears that John uses them as equivalent expressions.³⁵ Their use in Revelation, however, moves beyond the mere application of this imagery to Jesus. I cite the relevant data:

τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ – 1:8 (of God); 21:6 (of God); 22:13 (of Jesus)

ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος – 1:17 (of Jesus); 2:8 (of Jesus); 22:13 (of Jesus)

ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος – 21:6 (of God); 22:13 (of Jesus)

These three titles are expressed alone or in combination four times in self-declarations by either Jesus or God.³⁶ In 1:8, the first phrase (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ) is used as a self-designation of God. The second phrase (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος) is used as a self-designation of Jesus in 1:17. In 21:6, the first (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ) and last (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος) phrases are used to refer to God. Finally, in 22:13 all three phrases are used to refer to Jesus. The use in 22:13, in particular, suggests that these three titles should be viewed as equivalent in Revelation,³⁷ and this instance of their coalescence functions as the climactic use in the book.³⁸

The titles “lord” and “king” can be seen as functioning in a similar manner. As noted in chapter three, God is repeatedly called the “Lord God Almighty” in Revelation (see 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22) and is identified as the “One seated on the throne” (4:2, 3, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5).

³⁴ Bauckham has dealt with this pattern in his *Theology of the Book of Revelation*. See *Theology*, 54-58; see also *Climax of Prophecy*, 33-34.

³⁵ Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 122. Bauckham notes that this set of titles is the only self-designation of God in Revelation (*Theology*, 26; see also James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 80).

³⁶ Rev 2:8 could also be considered a separate instance, but its occurrence can be explained by the number of connections between the description of Jesus in 1:12-20 and the messages to the seven churches in Rev 2-3. Bauckham notes that 2:8 does not fit the same form as the other four occurrences as it is not properly a self-designation (*Climax of Prophecy*, 34).

³⁷ Bauckham, *Theology*, 55; Mounce, *Revelation*, 407; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:59; Beale, *Revelation*, 1055.

³⁸ Although the designation of Jesus as “Alpha and Omega” does not occur until 22:13, it does not appear that John is depicting a delay in the application of this title to Jesus in light of his attribution of these other related titles to Jesus earlier in Revelation. Contra Guthrie, “Christology,” 399.

Likewise, a variety of expressions are used to associate Jesus with royal authority.³⁹ Thematically, the rule, authority, and throne of God are shared with Jesus (1:9; 2:26-28; 5:6-7; 11:15-17; 12:10; 22:1, 3), and the shared authority of the two forms an important point of contrast with the authority shared by the dragon and the beast (13:1-7, 12; 16:14; 17:12-13; 19:19).

Next, the use of κύριος (11:8; 17:14; 19:16; 22:20, 21; cf. 14:13) could also reflect an application of a divine title to Jesus. Although some occurrences of κύριος may reflect standard Christian usage (see 11:8; 14:13; 22:20, 21),⁴⁰ the expression “lord of lords,” used together with “king of kings” (17:14; 19:16), appears to be drawn from Old Testament contexts which refer to God.⁴¹ These titles were also applied to human rulers,⁴² but the application in Revelation indicates that John affirms these as appropriate for God and rejects human appropriation of them.

The expression “the one who is, was, and is coming,” is used exclusively to refer to God in Revelation (see 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). As noted in chapter three, this expression is best understood as an expansion of the self-identification of God in Exod 3:14.⁴³ In connection with this expression, Jesus is identified as the “coming one” (1:7; 11:17; 16:5; cf. 1:4, 8; 4:8).⁴⁴ This should not be seen as Jesus functioning as the final expression of God, as in some early form of modalism; rather, this serves to identify Jesus’ unique role in initiating the eschatological plan of God. The vision of the New Jerusalem, in its description of the presence of both God and the Lamb, affirms the ongoing roles of both God and Jesus in the eschatological future.

³⁹ These include the titles of “king of kings” (17:14; 19:16) and “ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5), references to the “kingdom” (1:6, 9; 11:15; 12:10), statements of Jesus “reigning” (11:15-17; 20:4, 6), and the image of the heavenly throne (3:21; 5:6; 7:17; 22:1, 3).

⁴⁰ Divine overtones are possible in these occurrences, but dependence upon the usage of κύριος in the LXX or wider Jewish usage of κύριος as a title for God is difficult to prove with respect to the usage in Revelation.

⁴¹ See Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3 (LXX 135:3), 26 (LXX 135:26); Dan 4:37 LXX; cf. also 2 Macc 13:4; 3 Macc 5:35.

⁴² See Dan 2:37; 3:2 (LXX); Ezek 26:7; Ezra 7:12.

⁴³ The LXX renders the self-disclosure of God in Exod 3:14 with ὁ ὢν. This is also expressed in Philo, *Abr.* 24; Jos. *Ant.* 8.350. Aune provides a helpful discussion of the use of this terminology (*Revelation*, 1.30). See also Swete, *Apocalypse*, 5; G. Osborne, *Revelation*, 60; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.190

⁴⁴ Hofius notes, “Für Johannes ereignet sich in der Parusie des Sohnes Gottes das eschatologische ‘Kommen’ Gottes selbst” (“Das Zeugnis,” 513).

In addition, a number of titles that John uses to refer to Jesus (and, in some cases, to God also) in Revelation are used of God in the Old Testament writings. These include titles and motifs such as the “holy one” (3:7; cf. 4:8; 6:10),⁴⁵ ruler of creation (3:14; cf. 4:11), searcher of hearts (2:23),⁴⁶ the “living one” (1:17-18; 2:8),⁴⁷ and the provider of living water (7:16-17; cf. 21:6; 22:17).⁴⁸ The descriptions of Jesus’ love for the people (3:9, 19; cf. 1:5) mirror the description of God’s love for his people in Isa 43.⁴⁹ In his use of these titles from the Old Testament, it does not appear that John intends to represent Jesus as a replacement for God or as a new manifestation of God; rather, these titles and motifs serve to associate Jesus with God.

The use of divine titles in Revelation, then, is a significant aspect of John’s presentation of Jesus. In some cases we can observe the direct application to Jesus of titles used to refer to God in the Old Testament. More significantly, however, a number of titles are shared by God and Jesus in Revelation. Through his use of these titles, John associates Jesus with God in a unique fashion without eliminating the distinction between the two.

Titles in Revelation and the Roman Imperial Cult

Although the primary provenance of the titles used for God and Jesus in Revelation is the Old Testament, we must also consider the relationship between the titles in Revelation and those used to refer to the Roman emperor. As noted in chapter two, a number of titles that were used to refer to the Roman emperor carried religious significance. The depiction of the beast from the sea as having “blasphemous names” (13:1; 17:3) suggests that John views these divine titles appropriated by the emperor as properly belonging to God alone.⁵⁰ Within Revelation, however, it does

⁴⁵ See Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 40:25; 41:20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 48:17; 49:7; 55:5 (cf. also 2 Kgs 19:22; Ps 16:10; 71:22; 78:41; Hab 3:3).

⁴⁶ See Ps 7:10; Jer 17:10; 20:12.

⁴⁷ See Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:36; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Hos 2:1. See Aune, “Stories of Jesus,” 313.

⁴⁸ See Isa 49:10; Ps 23:2 (LXX 22:2).

⁴⁹ See Comblin, *Le Christ*, 153.

⁵⁰ See Cuss, *Imperial Cult*, 52; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 209; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, 635; Boxall, *Revelation*, 187; Caird, *Revelation*, 163.

not appear that the application of titles to Jesus can be explained solely on the basis of titles used in emperor worship. Certain titles, as will be seen, may coincide with those used of the Roman emperor, but the appearance of these titles in Revelation was likely due to their use in the Old Testament writings and in early Christianity.

Although not likely drawn exclusively from emperor worship, John may utilize a few titles polemically in Revelation. First, the title “son of God,” arguably one of the most significant titles in association with the Roman emperors in John’s time, is used only once as a title in Revelation (2:18). This title was an important expression within the imperial context as it connected the living ruler with his deified predecessor(s),⁵¹ and the application of this title to Jesus may serve to challenge this claim to power. Next, titles such as “lord” (11:8; 17:14; 19:16; 22:20, 21) and “king” (1:5, 9; 11:15; 12:10; 17:14; 19:16) were also used to express the authority of the emperor.⁵² The pair of titles “king of kings” and “lord of lords” (17:14; 19:16), while reflecting an Old Testament derivation, are likely intended to function polemically against the authority of the emperor.⁵³ While the beast from the sea may appear to possess all authority, Jesus is portrayed as the true “King of kings” and “Lord of lords.”

In light of the connections between the imagery in Revelation and the Roman imperial cult as discussed previously in chapter two, the dearth of intersecting titles is somewhat surprising. Although one could cite the relative paucity of titles drawn from emperor worship as evidence against a connection between emperor worship and Revelation, John’s response to emperor worship is not solely reflected in his use of titles. As we will see in the final section, it appears that the use of language regarding ritual and worship in Revelation can be understood best when viewed against this backdrop of the emperor cult. The lack of titles drawn from emperor worship may suggest, rather, that John intends to avoid presenting Jesus merely as an alternative to the emperor.

⁵¹ *IvEph* 2.404; *IGR* 3.933; 4.201, 311; *IBM* 522. Kiddle notes of John, “When, therefore, he uses the title ‘Son of God’ for Christ he is asserting a truth and incidentally challenging a falsity” (*Revelation*, 217).

⁵² On the former, see *IvEph* 2.412; 514B; 7.1.3245; *IGR* 4.1666; *Syll*³ No. 814. The term βασιλεύς was generally avoided in official contexts (καίσαρ and αὐτοκράτωρ were preferred), but the Roman emperor could be recognized as such. This perception may be seen in John 19:15; cf. Acts 17:7. See also Dio 53.17.2-4.

⁵³ These may also reflect Parthian usage of the title “King of Kings.” See D. Thomas, *Revelation 19*, 135-140.

Summary

In his use of titles, then, John demonstrates a complexity of thought. Given the variety and prevalence of titles in Revelation, it is unsurprising that scholars have often chosen to organize their discussions of John's presentation of Jesus according to the various titles used by John. An investigation of Roman imperial cult sources, Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish texts, and other early Christian writings suggests that John has applied titles to Jesus from a variety of sources. In some cases, titles reflect fairly standard patterns of messianic interpretation and expectation present in other early Christian and Second Temple Jewish texts. Certain titles do exhibit connections with those used in the Roman imperial cult, although it does not appear to be a major purpose in John's use of titles to refer to Jesus. The infrequent usage of titles associated with the imperial cult is somewhat surprising, but this may indicate that, for John, Jewish and early Christian categories serve a more foundational role than the imperial cult. Most significantly, John's application of divine titles and images from the Old Testament and the sharing of titles between Jesus and God in Revelation demonstrate the significant association of Jesus with God in John's religious worldview.

Lamb

Among the various depictions of Jesus in Revelation, the Lamb stands as the most significant.⁵⁴ In the preceding two chapters we considered potential sources for this imagery, and in this section I will explore how John creatively employs it. I will first address John's use in light of Jewish and early Christian expressions. Next, I will consider the relationship between John's development of the Lamb imagery and his assessment of Roman imperial authority. My aim is to assess here John's creativity, both in his employment of the image in Revelation and in his interaction with pre-existing material.

⁵⁴ As noted in chapter three, although the "Lamb" is used as a title to refer to Jesus, it still functions within the book of Revelation as a symbol that evokes certain meanings and associations.

Jewish Roots and Early Christian Usage

With respect to the source for John's depiction of Jesus as the Lamb, the contexts explored in chapters three and four – namely, the writings comprising the Old Testament and early Christian usage – provide the best sources. Both chapters note, however, that the material in Revelation cannot conclusively be demonstrated to depend upon any one particular text from the Old Testament or early Christianity. In this, we see an important example of John creatively interacting with prior religious writings and his current religious context.

As explored in chapter three, the imagery of the Lamb finds its literary source in the body of writings comprising the Old Testament. Several contexts can be suggested as providing the source for John's use of this imagery: the Passover Lamb,⁵⁵ the *Tamid* of Gen 22:13, lambs offered within the sacrificial system,⁵⁶ the suffering servant as described in Isa 53:7, and the use of a "lamb" to represent vulnerability.⁵⁷ Later employment of a ram/lamb as a symbol of power in Second Temple Jewish writings has also been suggested as a possible source for this imagery,⁵⁸ but the putative parallels are unpersuasive. The usage in Revelation, however, also proves difficult to connect with any one particular Old Testament passage. The Passover and sacrificial lamb imagery is likely primary, but echoes of Isa 53 and the *Tamid* of Gen 22 are likely present as well. The expression of this theme in Revelation, then, reflects John's creative synthesis of material present in the Old Testament writings. His choice of a term used infrequently in the LXX was likely intentional and allows him a degree of freedom in expressing this theme. John, then, has woven together the imagery in such a way that it both suggests connections with other prominent "lambs" in the Old Testament writings and yet also allows the imagery in Revelation to stand on its own.

Although the imagery of the Lamb may ultimately derive from usage in the Old Testament, John's use in Revelation has, most likely, arisen as a result of early Christian usage more broadly. As we noted in the preceding chapter, Lamb imagery was applied to Jesus in a diverse set of New Testament writings. Examples include 1

⁵⁵ Exod 12:1-30, 43-49; Num 9:1-14; 28:16-25; Deut 16:1-8; 2 Chr 30:1-27; Ezra 6:19-21.

⁵⁶ Exod 29:38-41; Num 28:1-10, 16-25, 26-31; 29:1-6, 7-11, 12-40.

⁵⁷ Jer 11:19, Ps 114, Micah 5:6 (LXX), and *Ps. Sol.* 8.

⁵⁸ See *1 En.* 90 and *T. Jos.* 19:8.

Cor 5:7, 1 Pet 1:19, Acts 8:32, and John 1:29 (cf. 19:14, 31).⁵⁹ Such diversity of authorship suggests that the symbol was widely used in early Christianity and cannot be identified with any one particular New Testament author.

It appears, in light of these examples in the New Testament, that the symbol was used primarily as an interpretative category for the death of Jesus. Apart from the association of this imagery with John the Baptist in the gospel of John,⁶⁰ it was used more extensively following Jesus' death and resurrection. In some cases, connections with the Passover are explicit. In 1 Cor 5:7, Paul interprets Jesus' death as the slaying of the Passover Lamb for the Christian community. The Gospel of John likewise connects Jesus' death with the Passover (19:14, 31), which likely serves to interpret the statement of the Baptist in 1:29. 1 Pet 1:19 interprets Jesus' death as a redemptive sacrifice made as an unblemished lamb.⁶¹ Acts 8:32-33 contains a quotation from Isa 53:7-8, which describes the servant as a sheep led to the slaughter. Within Acts 8, Philip uses the eunuch's reading of this text as an opportunity to convey the gospel to him. Although the application to Jesus' death is not made explicit in this passage, it implies the connection between Jesus' death and the slaughtering of the lamb depicted in Isa 53.

In light of these occurrences found elsewhere in the New Testament, it is reasonable to conclude that John was drawing from early Christian usage rather than exclusively from his own exegesis of the Old Testament. The use of the "Lamb" as a symbol for Jesus is not original to John, and, to the contrary, it displays interaction with other early Christian convictions and provides further support for his writing to be located in that context. Although it may be possible that John was aware of other early Christian writings and may have made use of sayings found in these texts, John's usage does not indicate a dependence upon any specific text.

Comparing the usage in Revelation to other early Christian texts, we see the importance of the symbol of the Lamb for John. This lamb-symbol appears in other early Christian texts, but no other text comes close to approximating its significance

⁵⁹ Different terms, such as ἀμνός (John 1:19; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet 1:19) and πάσχα (1 Cor 5:7), are used in these texts, which likely indicates that the terminology was not fixed for this motif. The use in 1 Cor 5:7 reflects a more explicit link with imagery from Exodus, and the use in Acts 8:32 is likely dependent upon terminology used in Isa 53:7 LXX.

⁶⁰ The statement in John 1:29 serves to foreshadow the events of the Passion Week, which is associated in the Gospel of John with the Passover (see 19:14, 31).

⁶¹ In this case, broad sacrificial imagery is employed rather than that of the Passover.

as expressed in Revelation. It is used twenty-eight times in Revelation to refer to Jesus and serves as the most prominent symbol within chapters 5-22. In terms of frequency of use and significance for the narrative, the Lamb in Revelation is blatantly more prominent than elsewhere in the New Testament.

Beyond this heightening of significance, John uses this symbol in a way that indicates his own independent thought. As noted previously, the term employed by John (ἀρνίον) is used infrequently within the LXX and elsewhere in the New Testament. The only other occurrence in the New Testament is in John 21:15 and does not refer to Jesus. Although John has likely chosen the image of the Lamb as a result of early Christian usage, he has employed different terminology than is found elsewhere. While this term is found in the LXX, it does not appear that John is dependent upon the texts in which this term appears.⁶²

John's use of the Lamb imagery, then, reflects engagement both with the wider context of early Christianity and the imagery in the Old Testament writings. This image serves to interpret the significance of Jesus' death and provide the paradigm for his followers in the book of Revelation. As such, the "Lamb" serves as a coherent symbol within the book of Revelation. In view of the wider narrative, however, investigation of Roman imperial themes may serve to shed further light upon John's selection and employment of this imagery.

Animal Symbolism and the Roman Empire

As we noted in chapter three, it does not appear that John has adopted the symbol of the Lamb from the Greco-Roman context.⁶³ Jewish and early Christian usage provides a better explanation as a source for this imagery. Nevertheless, we can see connections with Roman imperial imagery. In this section I will explore the way in which John employs Lamb imagery, which he has borrowed from his religious heritage, in his interaction with Roman imperial themes.

Within the narrative of Revelation, the Lamb does not stand as an isolated symbol. As we saw in chapter two, John has created a deliberate pairing of the Lamb with the beast from the sea. Throughout the book of Revelation, he makes several

⁶² As noted in chapter three, other considerations may have influenced John's use of this term.

⁶³ See Johns, *Lamb Christology*, 40-75.

points of contrast between the two figures.⁶⁴ This pairing suggests that this image was selected with Roman imperial power in mind. As we will see, a different symbol was readily available to John that could have served to identify more clearly this figure in Revelation with the Roman emperor. John's choice of the "beast" appears to be deliberate, and this decision may help to shed additional light on his choice of the Lamb as the predominant symbol for Jesus.

For the Roman Empire, the figure of the eagle was a prominent animal associated with the power of the Roman army.⁶⁵ Direct interaction with the symbol of the eagle appears in another apocalyptic text, *4 Ezra*. In chapter eleven of *4 Ezra*, the seer has a vision of a great and powerful eagle. Although this imagery, as in the case of Rev 13, is inspired by the depictions in Dan 7 (cf. *4 Ezra* 12:11), the selection of the eagle is likely due to its appearance on the standards of the Roman legions.⁶⁶ Reminiscent to Rev 17:9-11, *4 Ezra* depicts the various emperors in the symbolism of this vision.⁶⁷ The author of *4 Ezra* interprets the Roman Empire, then, as the fourth and final empire of Dan 7 which will be overthrown at the coming of the messiah (*4 Ezra* 11:36-12:3; 12:31-34; cf. also 5:3).⁶⁸

Within the book of Revelation, John, although addressing Roman power, does not use the eagle as a symbol for Rome. He does, however, refer to eagles in several texts in Revelation. In Rev 4:7, the fourth living creature has the appearance of an eagle. The description here, however, is based on the scene in Ezek 1:10.⁶⁹ An eagle in Rev 8:13 announces the three woes that will arise with the sounding of the

⁶⁴ As noted, this includes elements such as the depictions of both figures, descriptions of the followers of each, elements of power and authority, and issues of religious devotion.

⁶⁵ The eagle was featured on standards born by the Roman army, and an example of the importance of these standards may be found in a situation involving the Parthians. During the campaigns of Crassus and Antony, the standards were lost to the Parthians, and Suetonius cites Augustus' recovery of these standards as an example of his diplomatic prowess (see *Aug.* 21).

⁶⁶ Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 348. The fourth beast in Dan 7 is not identified with a particular beast, and it is the first beast in Dan 7:4 that has wings like an eagle. The lack of a particular animal designation for the fourth beast in Dan 7 has provided opportunity to make the association of this fourth beast with the imagery used by Rome.

⁶⁷ Stone notes the significance of the identification of the three heads (12:22-28) for the dating of the book and concludes that these are best understood as referring to the Flavians (*Fourth Ezra*, 363-365).

⁶⁸ The indictment and judgment of the eagle in *4 Ezra* 11:40-46 resembles the judgment and ruin described in Rev 17-18. The reference to destroying fortifications and walls in *4 Ezra* 11:42 likely refers to Rome's hand in the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁶⁹ καὶ πρόσωπον ἀετοῦ τοῖς τέσσαρσιν (Ezek 1:10 LXX).

remaining three trumpets.⁷⁰ The third use of ἀετός appears in 12:14, where the woman is given two wings of a great eagle in order to escape the pursuit of the dragon. This depiction is likely an allusion to Exod 19:4, where a similar phrase is used to describe the deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egypt.⁷¹ The other references to birds (ὄρνεον) in Rev 19:17 and 21 reflect the judgment of the armies that follow the beast.⁷² John has not, then, utilized the eagle as a symbol of the Roman Empire in Revelation; rather, John has adapted a different set of animal imagery to refer to the Roman Empire. The symbol of the eagle may have retained too many potentially positive connotations, and, as a result, the image would not suit John's purpose of portraying the essential nature of the Roman Empire.

The image of the beast from the sea (Rev 13:14, 15; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), on its own, does not clearly refer to the Roman Empire/emperor. Instead, John supports this identification through other statements and associations in Revelation.⁷³ The image has been adopted from Dan 7, modified in its features, and applied to the Roman Empire.⁷⁴ As noted in chapter two, John's references to "the beast" also draw upon Old Testament texts referring to Leviathan.⁷⁵

This imagery in Revelation, then, serves to identify Rome, not as a benefactor who brings prosperity and peace, but rather as a destructive force empowered by Satanic authority that seeks to wage war against the people of God.⁷⁶ John uses the animal imagery, then, to portray its grotesque, destructive nature. Dan 7, in addition to supplying imagery, also enables John to depict the fate of the

⁷⁰ Beale notes the appearance of an eagle in 2 Bar. 77:19 and 87:1, which announces blessing and judgment (*Revelation*, 490; cf. also 4 Ezra 11:7-8). The eagle could serve in the wider Greco-Roman religious context as a messenger for the gods (so Aune, *Revelation*, 2.523). In this case, there does not appear to be any imperial connections with this imagery.

⁷¹ καὶ ἀνέλαβον ὑμᾶς ὥσεὶ ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀετῶν (Exod 19:4 LXX).

⁷² Some irony could be intended here, as birds are called to judge and scavenge the armies which may be conceived of as bearing standards depicting eagles. The imagery of total judgment, however, is likely primary.

⁷³ See the discussion in chapter two.

⁷⁴ The connection of the beast and the sea is drawn from Dan 7:2-3. The description of the physical appearance of the beast adopts certain features from each of the four beasts of Dan 7. The "mouth like a lion" (Rev 13:2) is drawn from the first beast (Dan 7:4), the "feet like a bear" (Rev 13:2) is from the second (Dan 7:5), the appearance as a "leopard" (Rev 13:2) is from the third beast (Dan 7:6), and the ten horns (Rev 13:1) and the mouth speaking blasphemy (Rev 13:5; cf. 13:1) is from the fourth beast (Dan 7:8, 11).

⁷⁵ See Job 40-41; Amos 9:3; cf. 4 Ezra 6:49-52; 2 Bar. 29:4.

⁷⁶ Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123 (2004): 309.

emperor. Just as the fourth beast in Dan 7 is to be judged by the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:26-27), so also the beast from the sea is to be defeated and the people of God vindicated (Rev 19:20-21; 20:1-6).

In addition to identifying the origin and nature of Roman power, the use of the image of the “beast” may also serve, in part, to explain the selection and usage of the Lamb imagery in Revelation. Although “lamb” was a symbol used by early Christians and had significant ties to Old Testament texts, the Lamb is employed in Revelation in such a way that serves to contribute to John’s assessment of the empire. His use of the Lamb imagery not only challenges Christians to remain faithful to Jesus over against the Roman Empire, but contrasting images of the Lamb and the beast also serve to challenge Roman power. Jesus is depicted as possessing greater authority and power than the Roman emperor (19:20-21). However, the difference is not merely in the extent of this power. Rather, the very nature of the two is fundamentally different.⁷⁷ The Roman Empire rules through oppression, exploitation, and death, but the Lamb rules as a result of his sacrificial death.

Summary

John’s use of the Lamb imagery, then, demonstrates creative engagement on multiple fronts. His usage may be seen as reflecting early Christian depictions of Jesus as a Lamb, drawing imagery from a variety of Old Testament contexts, and engaging the use of animal symbolism in depicting Roman power and rule. As a result, John is able to provide a symbol that serves to interpret the meaning and significance of Jesus’ death, which also provides a paradigm for his followers and challenges Roman imperial ideology. Such an approach reflects not only a maturity in John’s religious convictions concerning Jesus but also a literary ingenuity in his employment of this theme in Revelation.

The Significance of Ritual

The final main theme to be considered is that of ritual and worship. Within the book of Revelation, the key scene of worship depicted in chapters four and five serves to

⁷⁷ Contra Stephen Moore, *God’s Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (London: Routledge, 1996), 127.

introduce the main narrative of the remainder of the book. Scenes of worship celebrate key events within the book⁷⁸ and serve to provide transitional breaks in the narrative.⁷⁹

As noted earlier, although Revelation likely does not depict particular worship services in the early church, it does reflect general patterns of worship present amongst Christian circles of the time. Throughout Revelation, John weaves together complex imagery from several sources to depict the worship of Jesus. Highlighted perhaps chiefly by Richard Bauckham, scholars have identified a pattern present in Revelation that associates Jesus with the “One seated on the throne” in the honors offered to each.⁸⁰ In addition to the presence of this pattern within Revelation, John also adapts imagery from emperor worship and from Old Testament texts that depict worship. In this section, I will address each of these sources of imagery in turn and argue that John has woven the imagery together in a unique way to emphasize this relationship between Jesus and God.

Ritual in Revelation in Light of Roman Emperor Worship

Much like we receive insight into John’s use of imagery by way of considering emperor worship, we gain access to the significance of ritual in Revelation by investigating ties to ritual practices in the imperial cult. As noted in chapter two, the emphasis on abstention from the worship of the beast (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) suggests that this concern with worship is significant for John.⁸¹ Although past studies have underscored well the polemic present against participation in the imperial cult, greater consideration is needed regarding the relationship between the imagery employed by John and the rituals associated with Roman emperor worship.⁸² Further, the overall pattern of the honors offered to the Roman emperor,

⁷⁸ These include the vision of the one on the throne (4:11), the appearance of the Lamb and reception of the scroll (5:9-14), the sealing of the 144,000 and the great multitude in heaven (7:10-12), the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:16-18), the appearance of the seven angels with the last seven plagues (15:3-4), and the overthrow and destruction of Babylon the Great (19:1-8).

⁷⁹ Carnegie notes subsections of 4:1-11; 5:1-14; 6:1-7:17; 8:1-11:18; 11:19-19:8 (“Worthy is the Lamb,” 251).

⁸⁰ Bauckham, *Theology*, 58-65.

⁸¹ So Barnett, “Further Reflections,” 113.

⁸² See Fiorenza, *Vision of a Just World*, 123; Morton, “Glory to God;” and id., *One Upon the Throne*; Aune, “Roman Imperial Court.”

especially as it compares with the honors offered to the traditional gods, may help to explain the way in which the theme of worship is developed in Revelation.

As noted in chapter two, a number of the ritual forms depicted in Revelation can be demonstrated to reflect types of ritual used in the worship of the Roman emperor. These include such things as the chanting of hymns,⁸³ the acknowledgement of universal consent,⁸⁴ incense,⁸⁵ the use of lamps,⁸⁶ the participation of priests,⁸⁷ and crowns.⁸⁸ In addition, the presence of imperial court imagery in a significant scene of worship in Rev 4 and 5 provides a challenge against the worship of the emperor.⁸⁹ These features were not exclusive to Roman emperor worship, but in light of the concern with the worship of the beast a reasonable case may be made that these are intended to counter the honors given to the emperor. Whether or not Christians in the seven churches had yet succumbed to the pressure to participate in religious ceremonies at temples dedicated to the emperor, it is probable that they would have recognized these rituals in Revelation as allusions to emperor worship because of the public nature of its various civic manifestations. Although the images of worship in Revelation cannot be explained solely on the basis of emperor worship practices, rituals and language drawn from emperor cult play an important role within John's development of this imagery in Revelation.

In addition to certain similarities between emperor worship and Revelation in terms of cultic ritual, consideration of the wider pattern of honors in emperor cult may help to shed light upon the honors shared between Jesus and God in Revelation. As argued in chapter two, the Roman imperial cult, in its various forms, did not function as a replacement for the traditional cults. In many ways, emperor worship drew its strength from its relationship to these cults. Simon Price, for one, has

⁸³ See *IvEph* 1a.18d; 3.742, 921; 7.2.3801; *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374; *IvSmyrna* 2,1.594; Dio 59.16.9-11; cf. Rev 4:11; 5:9-10, 12, 13; 7:10, 12. See also Carnegie, "Worthy is the Lamb," 254.

⁸⁴ See *Res gest. divi Aug.* 34: per consensum universorum; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.15: nunc me deorum hominumque consensus ad imperium; cf. Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.

⁸⁵ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 96; cf. Rev 5:8; 8:3-4.

⁸⁶ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374; cf. Rev 1:12-13.

⁸⁷ References may be found throughout the various sources. On this see Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 169-208; cf. Rev 1:6; 5:10; 7:15; 20:6; 22:3.

⁸⁸ *IGR* 4.353=*IvPergamum* 374; cf. Rev 2:10; 3:11.

⁸⁹ See Aune, "Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial"; Morton, "Glory to God and the Lamb"; and id., *One Upon the Throne*; Krodel, *Revelation*, 153.

argued that the imperial cult was associated with the cults of the traditional gods and not with honors given to the heroes.⁹⁰ The imperial cult, in its architecture, use of civic space, iconography, titles, and forms of ritual, followed the example of the cults of the traditional gods. In this way, the Roman imperial cult forms were not a replacement for these cults. Rather, emperor worship was incorporated within the wider religious structures.

Within Revelation, a similar sort of relationship may be observed as we see a parallel pattern in the theme of worship. Just as the emperor shared in the type of cult offered to the traditional gods (defining his place among these deities), so Jesus shares in the type of worship offered to God. Beyond the offering of hymns/acclamations, this includes acts such as offering incense (5:8; 8:3-4), the lighting of lamps (1:12-13, 20; 2:1, 5; 4:5), and the offering of firstfruits (14:4). As noted in the previous section, a number of titles in Revelation also associate Jesus with God and suggest that this may be seen as characteristic of John's approach. Titles that were associated with God in the Old Testament and others that are given to God in Revelation are also used to refer to Jesus. As it relates to worship, the vision in Rev 4-5, in particular, serves to highlight this theme. In Rev 4, the "One seated on the throne" is the recipient of heavenly worship. As the narrative continues in chapter five, the Lamb is included in the worship of the "One who sits on the throne." The overall structure in Rev 4-5 indicates that the honors to be offered to Jesus are the same honors that belong to God. The heavenly throne is shared (22:1, 3; cf. 3:21), and both are served by the same groups of twenty-four elders (5:8-10, 14; cf. 4:4, 10; 11:16), four living creatures (5:8-10, 14; cf. 4:6-11), and redeemed humans who serve as priests (20:6; cf. 1:6; 5:10). As the narrative continues, this theme of shared worship reaches its climax in the vision of the New Jerusalem, where God and Jesus together serve as its temple (21:22), illuminate the city and its inhabitants with divine glory (21:23-24; cf. 22:5), and rule from the throne (22:1, 3).

This point of comparison between the relationship of the emperor to the traditional gods, and the relationship between Jesus and God, may help to strengthen the argument that the cultic acts depicted in Revelation play a central role in indicating the relationship between Jesus and God. For an individual familiar with the larger religious context of Asia Minor, the relationship between the emperor and

⁹⁰ Price, "Sacrifice," 30.

the traditional gods would have been understood through the use of imagery and ritual. It makes best sense that such an individual would also recognize this same relationship between Jesus and God in Revelation. This is not to say, however, that the imagery employed in Revelation is simply a counter-argument to the imagery employed in Roman emperor worship. Although it would have served a polemical function against the cult and participation therein, the theme in Revelation is more complex. Most significantly, the larger religious worldview present in Revelation differs in significant ways from that of the surrounding culture in Asia Minor. As we will see in the next section, imagery drawn from the Old Testament writings and Second Temple Judaism form an important part of the depiction of worship in Revelation.

Ritual in Revelation in Light of OT and Second Temple Jewish Themes

Although several aspects of the worship depicted in Revelation address features of emperor cult, John also draws from depictions of worship in the Old Testament and in Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. The use of these sources suggests that John intends his depiction to offer more than simply a contemporary alternative to Roman emperor worship. The heavenly worship, which includes both God and Jesus, stands in continuity with worship depicted in the Old Testament writings. Several features indicate the importance of this connection.

First, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, it appears that John has drawn heavily from certain Old Testament texts, such as Ezek 1, Isa 6, and possibly Dan 7, in his depiction of the heavenly throne-room and the scenes of worship. The resulting imagery that John has created is truly his own, but John intends the throne-room he describes to be identified with the same one envisioned by the Old Testament prophets. The “One seated on the throne” is to be identified, then, with the divine being seen in these antecedent visions.⁹¹

⁹¹ The Fourth Gospel likewise makes a similar assertion about Jesus’ relationship with the heavenly throne, but points of contrast may be seen with this theme as it is depicted in Revelation. In John 12:41, Jesus is identified as the one whom Isaiah saw. The book of Revelation, however, draws from these scenes in such a way as to identify Jesus alongside the “One seated on the throne.” John, in Revelation, still places Jesus on the throne and identifies him with the glory of God (cf. Rev 21:23), but the emphasis in Revelation appears to be more upon this relationship between Jesus and God.

Next, John uses a variety of forms of ritual that may likewise be connected with worship as portrayed in the Old Testament. Prayers (5:8; 8:3-4),⁹² hymns (4:11; 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10, 12; 11:17-18; 15:3-4; 19:1-8),⁹³ incense (5:8; 8:3-4),⁹⁴ and the *trishagion* (4:8)⁹⁵ all reflect Old Testament elements of worship. Although certain rituals likely serve a polemical function against emperor worship, they also associate the worship of God in Revelation with the Old Testament cult, which was believed to be a reflection of the heavenly patterns of worship.⁹⁶ Within the context of the Old Testament writings, these acts were properly directed to God. Notably, as these forms of worship are depicted in Revelation, both God and Jesus are designated as appropriate recipients.

Third, as argued by Bauckham and Stuckenbruck, the prohibitions against angel worship in Revelation appear to demonstrate familiarity with this literary motif in Second Temple Judaism.⁹⁷ Although these prohibitions typically functioned to prevent the confusion of angelic messengers with God (thus affirming the boundaries of proper devotional acts), it appears that John has employed this motif to emphasize the association of Jesus with God.⁹⁸ By using these prohibitions in reference to the angels, John makes a sharp distinction between the angels, on the one hand, and Jesus and God, on the other. Even if one allows for certain common elements between the description of Jesus in Rev 1 and the descriptions of angels elsewhere, whatever confusion that could have arisen as to the status of Jesus vis-à-vis the angels is addressed by the use of this prohibition motif.

Finally, further lines of demarcation with respect to proper worship practices may be observed in Revelation. Emperor worship appears to be the target of John's

⁹² The use of prayer may be found throughout the Old Testament. On this see, Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994).

⁹³ It does not appear that the content of these hymns, with the exception of 15:3-4, are based directly on texts from the Old Testament. Certain themes that occur in Revelation also appear in the Psalms, but John has provided the literary shape of the material in Revelation. As noted earlier, these hymns occur at significant points and celebrate key events in the narrative of the book. They function, in this way, like the songs of praise in Isa 40-55. See Carnegie, "Worthy is the Lamb," 250.

⁹⁴ See Exod 30:1-10, 34-38; Lev 2:2, 15-16; 4:7; 6:15; 16:12-13.

⁹⁵ See Isa 6:3.

⁹⁶ See Heb 8:5.

⁹⁷ Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus," 322-41; and id., *Climax*, 118-149; Stuckenbruck, "An Angelic Refusal of Worship," 679-696.

⁹⁸ See Bauckham, *Climax*, 118-149.

polemic in certain portions of the text, but he also attacks idolatry more generally (9:20; 21:8; 22:15; cf. 2:14, 20). Worship of other “gods,” whether idols or the Roman emperor, is false worship, and these perversions of worship are ultimately associated with Satan. John counters this Satanic system with imagery that strongly associates Jesus with God and yet attempts to maintain an orientation to the divine that reflects ancient Jewish monotheism.

John draws, then, significant motifs and images related to the worship of God from the writings of the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism. These descriptions of worship serve John’s purpose of including Jesus as a recipient of cultic devotion alongside God. The depiction of worship in Rev 4-5, in particular, suggests that John views such worship as consistent with worship depicted in his and his readers’ scriptures. This imagery also draws from more contemporary Jewish concerns with safeguarding the bounds of proper worship, reinforcing this association of Jesus and God in the devotional practices of the seven churches.

Summary

Our evaluation of worship in Revelation demonstrates that John has woven together a number of related expressions, themes, and depictions of rituals to communicate his vision. John’s depiction of Jesus as a recipient of worship considered alongside the worship reflected in emperor cult, the Old Testament writings, and early Christian practice indicates that John has labored to achieve several different goals.

First, John is able to provide a challenge against participation in Roman emperor worship. Emperor worship, as John demonstrates, is not merely a matter of “civic duty.” Rather, such an act has deep religious significance.⁹⁹ Participation in emperor worship is shown to be worship of the beast, and such worship is ultimately directed toward Satan. As a result, Christians are to abstain, even in the face of the threat of death, but they may do so in the knowledge that they participate in worship of the true God. A secondary role of John’s challenge against emperor worship is that it also stresses the significance of Christian devotion to Jesus and God. Jesus is not merely another god. Rather, together he and God alone share the heavenly

⁹⁹ Contra E. F. Scott, “The Opposition to Caesar Worship,” *CH* 2.2 (1933): 94.

throne and the heavenly worship.¹⁰⁰ Comparison with patterns from the Roman imperial cult, then, serve to highlight the significance of the relationship between Jesus and God as depicted in Revelation.

Second, John is able to affirm the patterns of devotion present in the early church. Although Revelation may not reflect the details of particular liturgies within the early church, it appears that John assumes that his recipients participate in acts of religious devotion to Jesus. The presence of polemic against emperor worship and idolatry, coupled with these depictions of the worship of Jesus, serves not only to provide boundaries for the community but also to validate the practices within the local congregations.

Finally, John, through his use of imagery in Revelation, has the means to posit the continuity between early Christian practice and the religious heritage of the Old Testament. Scenes of worship, such as the heavenly court in Rev 4-5, and the language of the hymnody, such as depicted in Rev 15:3-4, reflect significant connections with Old Testament texts. The use of this imagery indicates that John views proper worship of God as now including the worship of Jesus in light of God's redemptive work. The inclusion of Jesus as a recipient of cultic devotion best explains other statements regarding the "Jews" in Revelation (2:9; 3:9). The Jews living in these seven cities likely recognized and rejected these convictions concerning the worship of Jesus, and external pressures may have further exacerbated this conflict.¹⁰¹ John's polemical statements in 2:9 and 3:9 against "those who call themselves Jews" indicate, not a rejection of Judaism, but rather a claim for the early Christian community as the rightful heirs of the Jewish traditions.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Knight, "Enthroned Christ," 49. He notes that this relationship, and the depiction of a single throne, helps to avoid the accusation of two gods in heaven (49-50). See also Moyise, *Old Testament*, 95-96.

¹⁰¹ It is difficult to determine what role Jews in the seven cities may have played in the persecution of Christians. Jews were exempt from participation in emperor worship, and some have suggested that the "slander" mentioned in 2:9 may have referred to Jews identifying Christians before the Roman authorities as not participating in emperor worship (see Charles, *Revelation*, 1.56-57; Mounce, *Revelation*, 75; Beale, *Revelation*, 240-241). Although this may be possible (see Acts 17:5-9; 18:12-17; *Mart. Pol.* 12-13, 17-18; Tertullian, *Scorp.* 10), it is difficult to determine this conclusively based on the material in Revelation. It is likely that social pressure, at the very least, encouraged the Jews (who were exempt from participation) to further disassociate themselves from the Christian communities.

¹⁰² So A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 85-87; contra David Frankfurter, "Jews or Not?" *HTR* 94 (2001): 403-425.

Investigation of both Roman emperor worship and the Old Testament, then, helps to highlight the significance of the theme of worship as well as the complexity of John's convictions. Studies suggesting the central importance of worship to Revelation, and to John's presentation of Jesus, are well-founded, but effort must be put toward understanding the diverse ways in which this theme is expressed. Features from emperor cult, from the Old Testament writings, and from early Christian practice have been carefully incorporated within Revelation. As Frey notes,

Therefore, in the counter-culture of Revelation, cultic elements form the backbone for the whole construction of reality and one may ask whether the author shaped his literary world as a 'counter-image' of the real world as he perceived it or whether his fundamentally cultic mindset led him to see the crucial problem particularly in the cultic dimensions of everyday city life.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have argued that John has woven together imagery from Roman emperor worship, the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism, and early Christianity. The particular interface of these different sources varies depending upon the context. In some cases, Roman imperial imagery is arguably primary; in others, John is more directly engaging imagery from the Old Testament writings. In the case of the titles that John applies to Jesus, for example, Old Testament passages associated with messianic hope or with God prove to be more significant. In the case of the religious devotion and rituals reflected in Revelation, imagery from these sources coalesces to create a significant theme in Revelation that challenges emperor worship, reinforces Christian devotion to Jesus, and suggests continuity between the worship depicted in the Old Testament writings and the worship offered jointly to Jesus and God.

Although only three examples have been offered here, these together help to demonstrate the intricacy and ingenuity with which John engaged imagery from these sources to portray Jesus in Revelation. Examining these different sources of imagery, then, the resulting picture from Revelation is neither a Jesus who merely

¹⁰³ Frey, "Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult," 253.

reflects the Roman emperor¹⁰⁴ nor a predominantly Jewish portrait with a few Christian interpolations.¹⁰⁵ Rather, in its portrayal of Jesus, Revelation stands as a Christian work built with the complexity and creativity of imagery woven together from Roman emperor worship, the Old Testament, and early Christianity.

¹⁰⁴ Contra S. Moore, *God's Gym*, 130, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Contra Edwards, "Christological Perspectives," 139, 148; Ford, *Revelation*, 3-4.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

At the outset of our study, we noted the unique portrayal of Jesus in Revelation. Through closer investigation, we have appreciated all the more the ingenuity and sophistication of the depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Throughout the book, John weaves together a number of images, motifs, and themes in his presentation of Jesus. I have argued, here, that the interaction with this material represents a complex, well-developed set of religious convictions concerning Jesus, creatively expressed in this early Christian writing. Although a number of studies have addressed aspects of John's presentation of Jesus or have attempted to provide a synthesis of these images, I have suggested the need for a reexamination of the essential nature of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus as expressed in the book of Revelation. Within this thesis, I have argued that John interacts with imagery from his cultural context (Roman emperor worship), from the key writings of his apparent religious heritage (the Old Testament), and from convictions shared with the early Christian community.

In chapter two, we explored a significant element from the wider cultural context in Asia Minor: namely, Roman emperor worship. Although some have viewed the Roman imperial cult, in its various forms, as simply a political tool,¹ our survey of the patterns of ritual and imagery supports the assessment of Roman emperor worship as a genuine part of the larger religious landscape.² Within Revelation, the symbols of the "beast from the sea" (11:7; 13:1-18; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10, 13; 17:3, 7-18; 19:19-20; 20:4, 10) and "Babylon the Great" (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) appear to be directed against Rome, the emperor, and emperor worship. For John, this appears to be primarily a religious struggle motivated not by persecution, but rather by the depth of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus.

¹ See, for example, Nilsson, *Greek Piety*; Nock, "Deification and Julian: I."

² See Price, *Rituals and Power*; Friesen, *Imperial Cults*; Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*.

As the narrative unfolds, John draws a number of points of contrast between Jesus and the beast from the sea, suggesting an essentially antithetical relationship between the two. On this topic the foregoing theory of polemical parallelism is able to explain some of this material in Revelation.³ Upon closer examination, however, John also adopts, modifies, and challenges a number of other images and motifs associated with the Roman imperial cult. John provides a significant challenge to emperor worship and argues for continued Christian faithfulness to Jesus even in the face of possible persecution. As demonstrated in chapter two of this thesis, Roman emperor worship forms a noteworthy component in John's presentation of Jesus, and investigation of this imagery should serve a significant role in discussions of the depiction of Jesus in Revelation. Emperor worship alone, however, fails to explain the full array of material in Revelation.

As we moved to the second major source of John's imagery, the writings comprising the Old Testament, we found that John draws from a number of passages in his depiction of Jesus throughout Revelation. His interaction with the Old Testament writings is expressed in a variety of images. Major images, such as the Lamb, and significant descriptions, such as the rider on the white horse (Rev 19), reflect interaction with a number of Old Testament passages. In some cases, such as that of the Davidic imagery (3:7; 5:5; 22:16), John demonstrates patterns of messianic interpretation observable in other Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writings.⁴ In other cases, such as the three-fold title in 1:5 and the description of Jesus in 1:12-20, he demonstrates creative interaction with and integration of various themes and motifs. The findings of chapter three have affirmed the central importance of the Old Testament writings for John and have demonstrated his own unique interaction with a diversity of passages.

³ Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars*, 147-191; Meggitt, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously," 157; Barnett, "Polemical Parallelism"; and id., "Revelation 12," 297; J. D. Charles, "Imperial Pretension," 87; Frey, "Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult," 252; David A. DeSilva, "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13," *TJ* 12 (1991): 201; Nestor P. Friedrich, "Adapt or Resist? A Socio-Political Reading of Revelation 2:18-29," *JSNT* 25.2 (2002): 187; cf. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 290.

⁴ See *Ps. Sol.* 17:21ff; 4Q252 5:1-3; 4Q285 5:1-4; *T. Jud.* 24:4-6; *Sir* 47:22; *4 Ezra* 12:32; *Tg. Isa.* 11:1, 10; *Rom* 15:12; cf. also *Matt* 1:1, 6; 22:42-45; *Mark* 11:10; 12:35-37; *Luke* 1:32, 69; 3:31; 20:41-44; *John* 7:42; *Acts* 2:30-36; 13:22-23, 34; 15:16; *Rom* 1:1-4; 2 *Tim* 2:8; *Justin*, *1 Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 86; *Ign. Eph* 20:2; *Trall.* 9:1; *Smyrn.* 1:1.

In addition to these two major sources of imagery, we have also considered the context of early Christianity itself. We began by exploring the relationship between John and his readers that would have resulted in a set of shared religious presuppositions. We considered first religious presuppositions relating to subjects such as God, the angels, and demons before discussing those related to Jesus. Within the second half of chapter four, then, we explored the relationship of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus to those found in other early Christian writings. In his presentation in Revelation, it appears that John expects his readers to possess a certain awareness of the life and teachings of Jesus. John also draws upon significant titles and motifs expressed elsewhere in early Christianity, and he likely engages the devotional practices of the seven churches. In these ways, John's religious convictions can be situated within the context of early Christianity, but his creativity is seen in the unique way he expresses these common images and motifs.

In the final main chapter, I have provided an assessment of the overall nature of John's religious convictions concerning Jesus. I have argued that the material in Revelation cannot be separated into different "Christian" and "Jewish" segments, as some have suggested,⁵ but rather represents a complex, integrated literary work. In his depiction of Jesus, John weds together imagery from Roman emperor worship, the Old Testament writings, and from early Christianity throughout Revelation. As was demonstrated in the second half of chapter five, the Lamb imagery, John's use of titles, and the depictions of worship in Revelation each demonstrate interaction with these three major sources. In each of these examples, John interacts with these materials in differing and creative ways, resulting in a portrait that is truly his own.

In many ways, John's depiction of Jesus both reflects the heritage of Christian thought of the previous decades and anticipates the social and theological struggles that would arise in the subsequent times. Through its unique images, motifs, and language, the book of Revelation provides a significant, mature expression of early Christian thought concerning Jesus. It is unsurprising, given the nature of this imagery, that this depiction of Jesus still continues to resound today, inspiring hope amid the oppressed and worship amongst those who continue to identify themselves as followers of the Lamb.

⁵ See Bultman, *Theologie*, 518; Edwards, "Christological Perspectives"; Ford, *Revelation*.

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